



# THE GNOMES of the SALINE MOUNTAINS

ANNA GOLDFMARK GROSS



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WHISPERED MALICIOUS TALES INTO HIS EARS

# The Gnomes of the Saline Mountains

A FANTASTIC NARRATIVE

By

ANNA GOLDMARK GROSS

Author of "The Whim of Fate," and numerous  
short stories and plays.



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**ANNA G. GROSS.**

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I dedicate this book to the  
blessed memory of my  
father.      ✪      ✪      ✪

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by  
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Near Dresden lies a garden,  
Therein a cherry tree,  
Beneath whose fragrant shadow,  
Came happy dreams to me.

On its bark my love for her,  
In ardent words I traced;  
In rapture, then in sorrow,  
Trembling with nervous haste.

The moon so bright had risen,  
Those words glared forth at night.  
I glanced at them all frightened,  
Then screened them from my sight.

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

On zephyr's wave a whisper came,  
From wicked gnomes to me addressed:  
“Come here, come here, thou human toy,  
And find with us thy final rest.”



# The Gnomes of the Saline Mountains

A FANTASTIC NARRATIVE

## I.

Though rather early in the morning, the well-known esplanade along the beautiful Traunsee at Gmunden, surrounded by green-decked Saline Mountains, was already thronged to overflowing with eager-looking sightseers, watching excitedly the completion of the grandstands which were now being erected for the great event of the day.

Special trains arrived hourly from Ischel, Aussee, Hallstadt, and other mountain resorts of prominence, and the excitement seemed to increase each moment more and more.

Humdrum life was thrown aside by young and old; everyone looked on expectantly, reviewing the grandstands, the tourists, and everything new around them.

Fair-browed girls robed in spotless white muslin, garlanded with flowers and bright with rosy badges in honor of the occasion, were seen here and there, while their eyes sparkled and their lips drank from the cup of happiness, enjoying life and the blessing of being young.

The constantly increasing throng of summer visitors and tourists from all parts of the globe, speaking different languages and wearing outlandish clothes, made up a bewildering picture, while the July sun beamed down upon them, and over lake and green-decked mountain-tops.

The much talked of floral regatta of 1910 was not to take place until five, but by one o'clock the grandstands near the water, hardly completed, began to fill rapidly with the elite of Viennese society. These floral festivals, which had been so popular in previous years, were to be surpassed in artistic splendor and brilliant originality by to-day's display of picturesque effects, and symbolism of national life.

Members of the highest nobility had consented to take leading parts in the regatta, which was under the protectorate of the Archduke Victor.

Many celebrities of the musical world, living there in their beautiful cottages, were seen quietly taking their seats. The great bare mountain "Traunstein" seemed to smile down on them from his aerial height in friendly approval; they were no strangers to him, these music giants, but rather belonged to his enthusiastic admirers.

Every spring they came to him, seeking relaxation for their over-strained nerves, and every fall, when his bald head began to be covered with a cap of snow, they went home full of elasticity and creative power, often bringing along conceptions of masterpieces which were later to fill the entire musical world with admiration. No wonder then, that the bald-headed old fellow up there so high above his neighbors looked down so proudly upon them.

Loud blasts of trumpets in the distance announced to the patiently awaiting throng the approach of a long line of richly decorated boats. Archduke Victor, leading the procession, sat in the stern of his boat, which was gorgeously arrayed to represent a bower of field roses. He opened the festival by throwing red carnations into

the water as far as his hand could reach. Next came the customary exchange of greetings among the Austrian nobility, whose elaborately decorated boats were stationed on both sides of the lake. At their approach, the orchestra on the esplanade burst forth with the National anthem of Austria, and the spectators applauded frantically.

Right and left, as far as the eye could see, the shimmering surface of the lake, with its little, gently splashing wavelets, was covered with brightly colored crafts, every one an unique marvel of its kind.

There came splashing along a huge Easter egg, made up of lilies of the valley; here a pagoda of large sunflowers called forth the admiration of the delighted sightseers.

From the opposite shore there came floating a half opened Nautilus, out of which a green-clad naiad cast coquettishly her golden net, trying to catch some inexperienced young fish in her golden meshes. Nearby sailed a sleeping beauty (though rather wide awake) embowered enchantingly in clusters of American Beauties, looking in all directions for her enchanted Prince to appear and make ardent love to her.

Suddenly there came, as if by magic, a gondola from the other side of the lake; it was gorgeously decorated, shining brightly in the brilliant afternoon sun. This floating work of art was made of lotus flowers, over which a canopy of glittering, diaphanous material was hanging, presumably as a suitable background for a lady now the cynosure of all eyes. She was of such entrancing beauty that all who beheld her sat spell-bound and actually forgot to applaud, according to the customary greeting to newcomers, scarcely knowing which to admire first; the magnificent craft, so artistically constructed, or the dazzling apparition within.

Amazed and speechless, the distinguished gathering gazed at her. "Who is she?" they whispered to each other. Her name was not on the list of nobilities. Nobody knew anything about her, but she was gorgeously dressed, her costume representing that of Cleopatra, made up of pale green crepe de chine, covered with little amorettes of silver pearls, which hung loosely in artistic folds about the luxurious outlines of her bewitching form. Long flaxen hair, artistically

arranged, set off with diamond sparks, fell about her, and shone like molten gold in the setting sun. It was supposed to be a real reproduction, according to ancient pictures, of the flirtatious Queen of Egypt, seen in the art galleries of Florence, Genoa and Rome. Her large black eyes held a singular fascination in their sparkling depths, which if once looked into, fastened themselves upon the imagination of man to be forgotten no more.

At the sight of all these splendors amid such exclusive surroundings, she looked with a frightened stare into space, as if she were a newcomer, a stranger in this atmosphere of wealth and distinction. Her features were rigid and white, and she seemed fascinated, dumb with admiration at the sight of the splendid surroundings. For this reason, she had failed to notice the sensation her beauty had aroused among the masculine sight-seers.

A slender man, with deep set eyes, and thin and bloodless lips tightly pressed together, sat in an unpretentious little boat a short distance away, murmuring grimly unintelligible words to himself. She caught sight of him and sent him a

friendly glance and a smile similar to the greeting of well-known friends. He did not lose sight of her for a moment, but almost devoured her with his eyes.

With feverish eagerness he followed her every movement, knitting his brows threateningly when any boat of the Viennese “*Jeunesse doree*” came with admiring curiosity too near to her’s. In his jealous rage he felt like driving all of them from the spot.

He began to reproach himself for having yielded to her cajoling entreaty to be allowed to take part in the festivity.

“Miserable fops,” he murmured contemptuously, as he contemplated the admiring men with a scornful sneer. “I loathe the sight of all these nobodies,” he grumbly soliloquized.

Many of them, in fact, had nothing to boast about. Many of these so-called nobles in addition to a noble name, combined magnificent poverty and an abhorrence for honest work; they acquired a heap of debts and their inherited estates were often in the hands of unscrupulous usurers, or mortgaged to the last cent, while the sneering

one had money in such abundance that he could have purchased patents of nobility for an entire regiment, and still have a reserve revenue from his unfathomable gold mine in South Africa. His finances would have allowed him the luxury of such a woman—although it must be whispered he had a wife in England, divorced some people asserted.

## II.

It was seven o'clock; the great animated festival drew near its end. At a given signal from the master of ceremonies, the music on the esplanade stopped; a hush fell on the distinguished gathering.

Archduke Victor, in his own exalted person, was to award the stipulated prizes to the boats of most artistic and original designs.

The fanfares sounded gayly over land and sea, and all the boats small and large ranged themselves in a semi-circle about the illustrious judge. The first prize, a silver statuette of the Goddess Hebe, was awarded to the fascinating princess of Egypt.

With a flourish of trumpets, and amid shouts of applause from the enthusiastic throng, all looked around for the boat of the prize winner. But there was no sign of it anywhere, nor was the single boat of the slender Englishman to be seen any more.

At a given signal from Mr. Ogden, the artistically constructed little boat had quietly turned about, and the two, availing themselves of the general excitement over the awarding of prizes, had quietly slipped away behind the neighboring piers, where the palatial home of the unfortunate Archduke Johann Salvatore is to be seen. He is better known to the outer world under the pseudonym "Johann Orth."

His sorrowing mother is still seen by passers-by sitting near the window with expectant eyes waiting for the lost son to return.

The brilliant floral festival enacted on the lake was at an end. On the esplanade were still seen groups of excited spectators discussing with great animation once more, the singular disappearance of the wonderful little boat that was fortunate enough to win the first prize and whose occupants disappeared without claiming that distinction. Others lost no time in entering the brightly illuminated cafes in the vicinity of the esplanade to refresh themselves after the excitement of the grand event.

On the eastern horizon a thin, fleecy scarf of

clouds was visible and the silvery moon with all her sparkling companions had just come out to beam upon the scene. The West was a single shrine of beryl, whereon ruby flakes of vapor seemed to float through the universe.

Meanwhile the much-admired boat was silently gliding over the surface of the gently splashing waves. The half reclining form of the fascinating woman seemed in the amber moonlight to resemble that of Aphrodite, as if risen from the waves and in a wanton mood, anxious to make a trial performance all by herself of her incontestable power over the other sex.

“Am I really so fascinating? Did those admiring glances tell the tale of my triumph?” she murmured with a happy smile to herself, looking askance at the boat alongside her’s, where her jealous admirer sat with gloomy eyes, consumed by jealousy.

Mr. Ogden, to whom she owed all this splendor, regarded with unconcealed displeasure the day’s proceedings. He reproached himself for having yielded to her entreaty. She had begged and coaxed him so much, until he gave his con-

sent, then he ordered the decoration of the boat. Her costume was especially ordered from the most expensive tailor according to ancient pictures of the Egyptian Queen. Ogden undoubtedly wanted her to be the most striking figure on the lake.

And now! Was he really jealous because she was the most admired, the most beautiful? "Jealous? Ho! ho!"

She shrugged her white shoulders with a contemptuous smile.

Did he really think that she loved him? "Phew!"

She had only accepted his ardent devotion to learn what riches and luxury really meant, for which she had an uncontrollable longing, a longing that almost devoured her! Night and day she thought of it, how to get rich.

The aggressive poverty in which she had passed her earlier days, was too hideous to dwell upon; she could not think of it without a shudder. The idea of being poor again took her breath away. How could she ever have consented to become the wife of a man who was poor? "Handsome but

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poor! What an anomaly!" she said in an undertone, smiling sarcastically.

With bitter envy and scorn in her painfully contracted heart, she saw the rich but most ugly looking women rolling by in their elegant automobiles disdainfully glancing at her and her poor outfit. Often enough when she was working,—engaged in the performance of her household duties in the two small dark rooms of a tenement house, without pure air, without light to brighten her beautiful face, she cursed everything. This hovel her home! And she had the priceless gift of beauty! She made up her mind not to stand it any longer.

The day came when she was seized by such a consuming desire to go in pursuit of pleasure, to wear elegant, stylish clothes and feel the admiring glances of the other sex resting upon her, that meeting Mr. Ogden by accident and dazzled by his wealth, captivated by his costly presents, she accepted his proposal to go with him forgetting everything, even the sacred duty of a mother.

## III.

The much-admired little boat was now approaching the narrow bay which is only two minutes distance from Gmunden. There stood the spick and span victoria of Mr. Ogden; the two black horses attached to it struck out sparks of fire with their impatient hoofs. The tall Englishman who had distanced her, stood there waiting. The moment he caught sight of her bewitching face, his eyes sparkled and smiling sweetly at her, helped her tenderly out of the boat.

The sun had just gone down behind a fleecy cloud and kindled a volcano, from whose silver-rimmed crater fiery rays of scarlet shot up almost to the clear zenith. She looked fatigued and closed her eyes for a moment. Now she caught sight of him and smiled, allowing him to take her away—

Tenderly kissing her hand, he led her to the carriage, lifted her carefully in and wrapped a

costly cloak, which was laying there, around the enchanting form he so adored.

She did not speak, but sat by his side in silence. He gazed at her several times and then gave the order to start. The carriage set off at a rapid gait.

The light of day was rapidly failing. Day and night seemed to join hands in a twilight mystery; black clouds were now piling up threateningly on the western horizon. A heavy gust scattered the thick aggressive atmosphere. Flying leaves were lifted up in the air as if by magic, and went through the wildest dances to the piping and howling of the storm, which now commenced to rage in all its fury, while voices of sinister shadows in the air, seemed to hold intercourse with others in the distance.

In these high mountainous regions a few moments suffice to turn a smiling landscape into a cheerless dripping desert. Claps of thunder and flashes of lightning followed each other at brief intervals. The rain now fell in torrents and the howling storm whipped the green lake whose wavelets had been so gently splashing half an hour ago.

## IV.

During the events described in the preceding chapter, a man still in the glow of youth was walking through the valley surrounded by lofty saline cliffs, in this howling storm, while clouds of shrivelled leaves danced above his head. He did not mind the dreary desolation around him.

His face, naturally strong with manly beauty, was now pale and haggard, showing unmistakable traces of a great sorrow. His large intelligent eyes were now sunk deep in their sockets. A nervous restlessness made him shiver, and his pale cheeks gathered only a little color when an obstinate cough threatened to rend his suffering breast asunder.

His coat betrayed the elegant cut of the fashionable tailor, but it was now old and worn, and hung loosely about his emaciated form. He looked like a teacher on whom fortune had persistently turned her back.

He carried in his hands a thick book, carefully

wrapped up in a handkerchief, which he clasped tightly almost tenderly to his breast, as if afraid at any moment it might escape or drop out of his hands. This idea made him tremble. It was indeed his only source of income; by the aid of this valuable book he had already earned many a gold piece in the Tyrolian and Styrian mountains.

His humorous lectures had been received with great approbation in different hotels frequented by many foreign tourists. And still, his earnings were not sufficient to support him and his motherless child, pretty little Marie, whom he had left in the meantime with a family of friends in Dresden. Every silver groschen he had earned was for the support of his child.

He had come all the way from Hallstadt, and this long walk had exhausted his strength considerably; and his heart was sick and heavy. Now he felt a frightful nervousness, fearing not to be able to reach in time the hotel where he was announced to deliver his humorous lecture.

He walked as quickly as he could to the farther end of the valley, where he expected to see a clearing in the forest, and an open road to the

hotel. But on all sides he met high, unfamiliar cliffs. Apprehension fell over him like an icy rain.

"Can I have lost my way?" he murmured, breathing heavily, while great beads of perspiration broke out on his forehead.

In an hour's time he was supposed to be at the Mountain View Hotel, and now . . . He looked helplessly around. Darkness began to fall, contesting every inch of ground with retreating daylight. His teeth were chattering with a cold chill, when he set out to find another opening.

The continuous excitement of this wandering from one hotel to another, the consuming sorrow, the bleeding wound in his heart, had gradually undermined his constitution, originally none too strong, and now this wearing cough, the insidious fever! . . . "How upset I feel; it's the peculiar atmosphere," he said to himself. At the same time he remembered that the entertainment he proposd to offer this evening, was not sufficiently furnished with witty epigrams and bon mots. So, bowing and smiling to an imaginary audience of cosmopolitan taste, he began to rehearse his lec-

ture as he walked on, sharpening the humour and adding some popular Austrian witticisms in vogue as trump cards.

Suddenly he looked up and saw a dark cloud threatening down upon him. Heavy gusts of wind commenced to bend the tops of the high, impenetrable trees. The songs of the mocking birds rang from the cedars in the distance in his ear and startled him.

He stopped in alarm and looked distractedly around him. Where was he? He could not make out. In the marshy places the fireflies were seen, wandering about and looking in the distance like malicious eyes of wicked sprites.

There was no longer any doubt, he had taken an entirely wrong direction.

Trembling with excitement, fearing delay, he rushed back to look for the right path, while his hot breath grated audibly on his weak lungs. A fearful storm was gathering, whispering and sobbing like complaining, frightened witches now whirling the leaves into the air vehemently as if driven by the furies of Hades.

A cold shudder ran through his fevered frame.

He gazed in helpless despair up and down, not knowing where to turn, while the rain poured down in torrents, soaking him from head to foot, and the centuries old tree-tops groaned and moaned like lost souls in Dante's Inferno. Now everything began to swim around him. Nature was in an uproar and bluster. Every little glowworm seemed to his frightened eyes to grow to gigantic proportions dancing wildly about.

Sharp flashes of lightning lit up the Traunstein ever and anon and seemed to come nearer and nearer, as if trying to march straight down upon him. He wanted to retreat, but could not move; there was a dark mist before his eyes. Uttering a piercing cry, he fell to the ground in a heap because the big monster kept on advancing.

With a tremendous crash, the great mountain burst apart and a whole troop of tiny, little mountain gnomes came out, dancing grotesquely like sprites of another world.

They were garbed in white vestments, like fleecy vapors, with brazen girdles which seemed to be sunbeams, and a cloudy stuff supposed to be mantles hung loosely around their diminutive

forms. With bare feet they pattered down upon him. As soon as they caught sight of him they commenced to giggle, swarming around him in great merriment. And then they put their ludicrous little heads together and pointed at him with contempt, whispering tales in falsetto tones to each other, which he could not understand. But he saw by the glare of their twinkling little eyes that they meant him, that they touched on something in his past life.

By and by they became bolder and touched his wet clothes; some of the older ones bent down to him and whispered malicious tales about his wife into his ears. He groaned aloud. "It is a lie! I don't believe a word of it!" he screamed, cursing the whole deceitful band. In his indignation he tried to rise several times in order to drive them away—down into the foaming stream; or back into their mountain riff; but he could not move; his feet seemed to be fastened to the very ground as if paralyzed or chained to earth. They whispered once more the name of his wife with scornful laughter, and passed on over hills and valleys dancing merrily.

Suddenly a bright light shone about him, illuminating the marshy waters; invisible choirs were singing sweetly, as if angels were descending from heaven. His eyes dilated as he saw a procession of tiny elves passing him, carrying little lighted tapers in their diminutive hands. In their midst he saw his dear mother stretching out her arms longingly towards him.

Tears came to his eyes. The dear face! He wanted to run to her, embrace her, but could not stir. A cry of horror broke from his trembling lips when the fair Siren so fatal to his life stood before him, intervening and trying to ensnare him again with the fascination of her glittering eyes, her bewitching smile, speaking to him of love and devotion which he believed again.

He listened to her; and a ray of happiness and delight filled his lovesick heart. She comes back to him! She loves only him! And unheeding the beseeching beckoning of his anxious mother, whose tortured heart writhed and bled for her suffering son, he hastened on with the enticing Siren,—where to, he did not know.

Suddenly they stood before a deep precipice;

darkness surrounded them, and the old trees commenced to sigh and moan and bend down upon them. Six shadowy forms with blazing torches appeared upon the scene carrying a coffin. Just in front of him the lid opened and the pale waxen face of his dead mother met his frightened eyes. He screamed aloud with horror. He had broken that noble heart, he had killed the best of mothers, because he had followed this evil spirit of his life.

With a loud cry he threw himself upon the lifeless form and wept, while the fair siren by his side laughed and laughed. Beside himself with indignation he panted, trying to strike her and hurl words of hatred in her face; but his hands fell helpless by his side; they had no power to execute his will. He seemed rooted to the ground.

## V.

“Get up from this wet ground, you fellow! How did you ever come here in this beastly weather?” He heard a deep sympathetic voice by his side. Awakened from his swoon, soon he looked amazed around him. What had happened? He did not know at all. His limbs were helpless and he lay on the ground where he must have fallen. His treasured source of income; his precious book, containing all his humorous lectures, lay rain-soaked near his side. How long he had been lying there unconscious, he did not know himself. A slim well-dressed man stood before him, doing his best to help him get up and trying to comfort him as much as he could, shaking his head wonderingly, and inquiring how he ever happened to be lost in such a place.

The lecturer looked about him with great relief. He did not see the gnomes anywhere. So it was not true what they told him, what they sneered at—

His heart rejoiced. It was only a hallucination, nothing else. All he had seen and heard must have been a stupid fancy of his tired brain. The best proof was, that he found himself lying helplessly on the ground, just awakening from a swoon.

Yes, the condition of his brain was at fault; that was as clear as daylight. "Thank God!" he exclaimed, while a feeling of unspeakable joy surged through his heart, now gladdened with thankfulness.

"I came near believing all that stupid nonsense of those wicked gnomes about my——"

"Hey! listen to me, poor fellow! What in Heaven's name, are you doing here on that wet ground?"

It was not until the stranger by his side had repeated his question that he could pull himself together and answer in a stammering voice, while a cold shiver shook his emaciated frame.

He looked at the stranger with dilated eyes. "Beg pardon sir. I—I must have lost my way. I was to give a humorous lecture at a neighboring hotel, and—and fell down," he said helplessly,

picking up his rain-soaked book, which he had discovered within reach.

"Why, you are wet through and through, my man. What can I do for you?" asked the stranger with deep sympathy.

A strange look of wonder illuminated the face of the downfallen man. He stammered: "If you would have the great kindness to help bring me to the Mountain View hotel. You see, I am expected there. I've got to earn some money tonight yet." He paused to cough; his voice seemed sepulchral.

"I have a motherless child to support." His head was bent to hide his emotion. My girlie must have all she needs. I—I couldn't stand it if they were to let her go hungry. God!" Again a vehement cough shook his wasted frame.

"Well, well, this turns out all right. I'll bring you there as we are staying in the same hotel."

"He's got fever, sir—better let's get him on the box," he heard the coachman say who stood by his side looking with obvious pity at the man before him.

A few paces away, a closed carriage was stand-

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ing with two lighted lanterns in front of it.

The storm had relented for a while, and mysterious silence fell upon the scene.

"Ogden!" now called out an excited woman's voice from within the carriage. "To miss the table d' hôte on account of that wretched beggar. Why it's just unpardonable!"

"That voice! . . . God have mercy!"

The man on the ground stammered as if struck by lightning. His eyes dilated, starting out of their sockets and staring horrified at the carriage.

"That voice," he repeated. "Could it be possible? Could she be there? Am I still under the influence of that horrible hallucination?" he moaned piteously. He could not and would not believe a word of all they told him.

Again he seemed to hear the revolting chuckle of the insolent gnomes, from the Traunstein, repeating their malignant tales of the outrageous conduct of his—

"Up with you quickly, for we'll have more rain within a short time!" said Mr. Ogden, now in a sympathetic voice, and at the same time heeding

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the woman's command in the carriage, which he would not have ignored for any consideration.

The coachman assisted the stranger to his seat on the box, and then Mr. Ogden entered the carriage, closing the door carefully.

Then the splendid team of horses set off like the wind. "God have pity on me! that voice!"

He could never forget the voice of that alluring siren who had goaded him on, until he saw nothing but her seductive face, listened to nothing but her deceitful declarations of love, without thinking of his mother's grief and her death!

Could it be possible? She here in that closed carriage with another man? No, no! It was another hallucination of his feverish brain.

How could she ever have attained such wealth? "Nonsense!" he murmured smilingly to himself, drawing a long breath of relief. Ah! how he had adored that faithless woman!

The smiling expression died out of his face, and a mournful compassion for his deserted child stole into his troubled countenance. Why did she bring so much misery into his life? Every fibre of his noble heart had been throbbing with uncon-

trollable love for her! And now—— the light of life, the hope of future years, was blotted out, clouds of despair and a grim night of an unbroken desolation fell like a pall on his heart and brain. Nothing to look forward to but misery!

## VI.

He had wandered about like a soul condemned and lost to eternity. But the one hope to meet her again possessed him, kept him alive. And then—she'll come back to him—he was convinced of that; to his lonely little Mary. And after all she might be touched by his devoted love that knows how to pardon and overlook certain occurrences in the life of a giddy-headed woman!

Unfortunately the cold, calculating coquette had never felt a tinge of anything like love, and had only an observing eye for the monthly allowances he received from his well-to-do parents.

He had come to Dresden a young, inexperienced student to pursue a course in literature and jurisprudence. The handsome, dashing woman, somewhere in the twenties, soon allured him with her well tried arts. Within a short time he was her devoted slave and did not see nor hear anything else but her alluring voice, and after six

months' acquaintance he led her to the altar without the knowledge of his parents.

When they found it out, through a friend living in Dresden, they were in despair, in their helpless anger. His mother never recovered from the rude shock her ambition had received. She did not know the woman, but when she heard that she belonged to a different faith, she was crushed, although the noble catholicity of spirit that distinguished her character did not allow her to show it. Her proudest hope to see that beloved son some day a respected citizen and lawyer in that little provincial town where his cradle stood, was gone forever!

Years of wrestling with life's sorrows had set upon her noble, benignant countenance, almost a seal of holiness, and shed over her placid features the mild, sweet life of a pure heart. Her white hair, the snowy mass prematurely white, wonderfully softened the outlines of her face.

Now deep lines commenced to furrow her sweet, indulgent features, and she grieved so deeply over the disgrace that she began to lose her health. Silently, without a word to her husband

she performed her household duties, until one day her enfeebled constitution gave way and she died, praying for the only child she had ever had.

Her husband, Mr. Burge, under the double stress of the sorrow, refused to hear anything of the ungrateful son, for whom he had slaved and worked all his life, and whose grievous mistake in marrying an adventuress, had cost the mother's life.

He had a large estate to look after, but he was alone now. He needed the son, but what could he do? He was ashamed of the daughter-in-law! "No, not a cent of my money can she have," he murmured constantly to himself with a flushed face and dry lips, looking at his imposing estate, where the beautiful Rhine rushed by and the tumbled down castles of long-forgotten races were seen in the distance.

The irate father dissolved all connection with the son and stopped all payments, denying him any assistance whatsoever in the future.

After the regular allowance from home had entirely ceased, it was necessary for the young

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husband to go and seek some profitable employment to support his expensive wife.

He had never earned a cent, and racked his brain now how to get money. The tantalizing condition pressed upon him that he might not be able to support his family. Finally, he got a position with a meagre salary in a newspaper office, but he was scarcely able to provide the barest necessities of life.

He commenced to write short stories. Although he had no ambition to climb to such a lofty niche in the temple of fame, he thought he might at least earn a modest income. Short stories and humorous lectures—that must make a hit. Everybody said that he had a humorous vein. Now the time had come to show his mettle, but the short stories were generally returned. The irate father had ceased to send money and no other help was discoverable. And then—after all that—she, his loving wife, dropped her mask and showed herself in her true colors.

“I have had enough of this,” she said with a disgusted shrug of her white shoulders to her

horrified husband. "I don't intend to starve here."

In vain he begged her to have a little patience for the sake of their child. The last short story must turn out to be a great success; he felt it and was really convinced of it.

"Convinced," she sneered contemptuously and turned away. No use of losing any breath about it, she thought. I am through with him anyway. Oh! How she longed to be rich, wear stylish clothes and be admired.

The beautiful coquette became restless in her little home; she looked about sick at heart, unable to tolerate it any longer, only wishing to get the opportunity to leave it forever. Her eyes were full of scorn when looking at her husband, who could not supply her with all that she longed for just now, and for which she would have pledged the salvation of her very soul. She commenced to frequent public places in the absence of her husband.

How she loathed poverty! "Anything but that," she murmured to herself, her face white with disgust as she walked on, gazing in all direc-

tions to see one of her former acquaintances, with a strange unrest in her large eyes. Her opportunity would come; she was sure of that, and it came in meeting one day the rich Englishman who was introduced to her by one of her former friends and boon companions.

Shortly after this encounter, she received a letter from the Englishman telling her of the deep and lasting impression she had made on him and how he longed to see her again. Her face flushed with pleasure as she read all these, and then perused an invitation to take an automobile ride through the beautiful mountains.

For some time she sat dazzled, and then she looked at the poorly furnished rooms; at her own wretched outfit, and her eyes flashed indignantly.

"I am through with all this. Here is the opportunity I was longing for," she said with a contemptuous smile. "I'll show him—the young inexperienced fool I have married—that beauty counts for a whole lot and . . . boldness even more."

She stopped at the window and looked down at the Englishman's automobile before her door.

"The opportunity — my opportunity has come." These words rang ceaselessly in her ears and filled her being with a strange endeavor to avenge herself on the man who could not supply her with all the luxuries she craved for, and according to her ethics, was entitled to.

## VII.

It was on Christmas eve, her husband had come home with a radiant face. His short story had been accepted, and the money was in his pocket. Now he could buy a fitting present for his wife. Of course it could not be too expensive, but she certainly would enjoy it all the same; he was sure of that, feeling that the opening of a successful career was inaugurated.

On his way home he had also bought a little fir tree to set up for the first Christmas celebration in his own home. The recollections of similar holidays in the house of his parents stirred him to the depths. How his heart quivered when he thought of his dear mother he loved so dearly. If she only were alive how different everything would be! He, who was brought up in luxury, mother's pet, and now—

With deep emotion he entered the house. With a brisk step he opened the door, looked around and found it empty, the wife and all her belongings gone!

The horror of that night was something he could never forget as long as he lived. Holding his ten months' old child in his trembling arms, he wept burning tears for her, the mother of his child. Could it be possible? A mother deserting her child on this holiest of evenings? He could not believe his eyes, but all she possessed went with her. No, no, she was giddy-headed, but not cruel. Motherhood must assert itself and surely would. How he loved her, how he longed to take her in his arms and feed his poor, famished heart with a touch of her lips!

He sat there in the dark listening and waiting for her to come back, to see the presents he had bought for her, and the money he wanted to give her. But one hour after another passed and nobody came. In the streets a joyous throng of merry makers pushed and jostled about wishing each other a merry Christmas. His heart was shaken to its depths by maddening grief; by bitter disappointment.

The room was icy cold, there was no fire in the stove, and the child half starved, screamed weakly in his arms. In wild desperation he

trampled on the little Christmas tree he had brought along to celebrate his first Christmas in his own home! He could see nothing but falsehood and treachery in this world. What meaning was there for him in this life-redeeming symbol?

Sick of everything he longed for death to come and take him and his little child away. Throughout that dreary night of agony he lay in bed holding the child in his arms, pressing his lips against her tender little hands, without being able to close an eye.

The bell in the neighboring churches rang out in the ears of the deserted man, sounding dismally through his lonely house. But they brought back pictures to his mind of his childhood's happy days, when he went to church on similar Christmas eves with his parents. One tear after another stole into his desperate eyes.

"God have mercy on me and my child," he murmured stammeringly. "I must, I will live for her sake. I cannot leave her altogether an orphan," though the gaping wound in his own heart kept on bleeding, bleeding incessantly.

## VIII.

"There! Here we are at last, no weather for a dog to be out," growled the angry coachman sulkily, jumping down from the box and opening the carriage door with a respectful bow, hat in hand.

Mr. Ogden staggered quickly out and lifted tenderly and carefully a woman's form to the wet ground. Young Burge, the deserted husband, had just come down with the help of the coachman who growled something he could not understand.

He looked at the woman in the darkness and a mist swam before his eyes; he leaned against the coach and his knees shook so that he could not make a single step. The night was black and the wind sobbed down the street, while the rain still fell in torrents.

He could not see clearly—but that voice—that voice! God! Could they have been right—these wicked, malicious gnomes? Did they know all about her and now, how?" he asked himself while

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his hands clutched the book convulsively in his helpless agony.

He thought he heard them again whispering, with a derisive chuckle, the whole story of her downfall into his terrified ears.

“How could she ever come to such magnificent clothes?” he thought. “Nonsense! It is simply a hallucination of a morbid, disordered brain. I am sick and miserable and see things where there is nothing to see.” This he murmured half aloud to himself, gazing at the retreating form of the woman incredulously. He could not distinguish her features and he made up his mind forcibly, in order to quiet down his excited nerves, that it was nothing else but a foolish trick of his imagination, and the fever which shook him now again was the obvious cause of it all. “Anyway, how could she have obtained all this luxurious outfit? His wife wealthy? Nonsense!”

He tried to laugh cheerfully about this foolishness, but suddenly he felt as though a knife were plunged into his heart. “The gnomes! the gnomes! If that which they had said were true!”

He moaned to himself, leaning against the wall in a faint condition. "Oh, anything but that... anything but that!" His whole frame shook as from palsy. That voice haunted him. He knew he had to go and look at her in order to convince himself, otherwise he could not find any rest.

## IX.

"Come, come! You must not lose your courage, my good fellow," said Mr. Ogden good-naturedly, coming out of the house at the same time. "But before you do anything else, you should go inside and get those wet clothes off; yes, that you must do, my man, you look pale enough indeed, and...."

"The deuce! If that is not our expected entertainer, the humorous lecturer from Ishle!" cried the stout, dignified hotelier, with a laugh as he caught sight of the dripping form of the poor, dazed lecturer.

"Lord, what a state he is in! Why he isn't able to lecture!"

"Never mind, a hot grog, some dry clothes from my wardrobe, and the rest will soon be managed," said Mr. Ogden good-naturedly with a sign to his valet, greatly gratified in being able to help the poor, miserable looking man with the pallor of death on his emaciated face.

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"And as for your entertainment being a great success, well—leave that to me, my dear fellow and don't worry; it will be all right," he went on, clapping the dazed humorist on the shoulder with an encouraging smile.

He bowed, without being able to utter a word of thanks; he bit his trembling lips and followed the valet with stumbling, shivering feet.

"Who could this benevolent stranger be? And what was he to that woman? Was he mistaken or not? If, after all she should be his—his—".

A hot wave flushed his face, distorted with shame as he thought of the possibility; his sorely tried heart was hammering mightily within him.

He could not get rid of this thought. "If she should really be the mother of his poor child . . . what, in the name of Heaven, was she then to this man? God have mercy on me and come to my aid!" he cried aloud, in great misery, his teeth once more chattering audibly in a fresh attack. "No, no! I can't and won't believe it! She can't be so shameless as to disgrace me and her innocent child!"

"Come, come quickly, sir," urged the valet impatiently, "I'll help you as much as I can."

After he had provided him with all the necessary clothes from the elaborately assorted wardrobe of the rich Englishman, who was about the same size, he made as careful a toilet as possible, under the prevailing circumstances and under the careful inspection of the helpful valet.

## X.

The supper bell now rang through the vast corridors of the Mountain View Hotel, crowded with tourists from all parts of the continent. Ladies, gorgeously dressed, commenced to take their seats at the supper tables in the dining room, escorted by elegantly garbed gentlemen; some of them in full evening dress, others again in black cutaway. The clatter of knives and forks had already begun. The spacious dining room was brightly illuminated. At the further end a carpet-covered platform was visible, whose edges were a bank of flowers. Everything was tastefully arranged. A pianist was already hammering away at a waltz of one of the latest operatic successes, with frightful execution, as an introduction to the interesting program of the evening, anxiously awaited by the patrons of the house.

The clatter, the bustling noise, had suddenly stopped and all eyes were riveted expectantly on the man who had just entered. Our humorist,

suffering in mind and body alike, pale and haggard, with restless eyes, made his appearance in the borrowed clothes which hung loosely about his emaciated form, tossing back his long locks with his right hand, while holding the cherished book tightly in the other, he came down to the very edge of the platform and smiled and bowed in all directions.

He looked exhausted and weary, as he was. But the room was crowded and he had to go on, whether he wanted or not, so he commenced: "Ladies and gentlemen."

He got no further. A mist swam suddenly before his eyes. A shiver shook his emaciated frame, his face became flushed and bloated and he stared and stared.

A side door had been opened a few minutes before and Mr. Ogden entered with the much admired Cleopatra on his arm.

They passed through the crowded dining room, close to the speaker's platform. She had changed her dazzling costume for a simpler, but an extremely stylish dress of blue silk. She still wore some of the lilies in the marvelous golden hair,

which was now fastened with a gold comb into a plain Greek knot. She was all aglow with excitement. The triumph of the afternoon was still lingering on her handsome face. She felt like shouting it out to everybody. Such conquest does not come often to a woman in the ordinary walks of life.

She walked proudly, with a queenly step to her seat, nodding to some casual acquaintances with a charming smile. And then she took her seat and turned a glance of curiosity upon the famished face of the entertainer. Their eyes met—and for a few seconds sank into each others' like sharp daggers. A red tinge covered her startled face, then she turned away, whiter than the lilies on her breast. She trembled visibly and looked frightened, casting down her eyes.

Mr. Ogden did not seem to have noticed any change in her appearance and gazed with a shocked countenance and great pity at the reduced exterior of the poor humorist. Suddenly a great excitement was noticeable among all the guests sitting around the small tables. Several gentlemen had left their seats, rushed towards the place

where the poor entertainer had collapsed after recognizing his faithless wife garbed in that splendor, so shamefully acquired, of which the wicked gnomes were whispering so constantly into his ears.

He still believed in her then; but now—the dark, threatening expression in his livid face was frightful to behold. He murmured something about the gnomes that nobody could understand, staring with hatred in his dilated eyes in the direction where she sat—she, the mother of his innocent child, now disgraced forever!

“God! What have I done to deserve such a punishment?” he murmured once more, pressing his bloodless lips tightly together as a cold perspiration broke out on his deathlike face.

A vision of his mother’s warning and sorrows was presented to his benighted intelligence and made him cry with terror and shame. The conflicting emotions were too much for the sadly undermined constitution.

“The wicked gnomes!” he whispered with audible scorn and contempt in his blazing eyes, as if sudden madness had seized on him, and then

tried to curse her, but not another word escaped his tightly closed lips, though the blood began to gush from them.

The truth, so cruelly thrust upon him, ended his life's drama; his eyes closed, he fell in a heap to the floor.

The pitying guests stood helplessly around him and did not know what to do. Mr. Ogden was the first one who had presence of mind to send to the nearest village in search of a doctor.

The beautiful Cleopatra sat there as pale as a ghost and was afraid to go near the prostrate form of her unhappy husband, fearing that someone might lift the veil and show the audience the ugliness of her real self. A feeling of restlessness rushed upon her as if the shameful story were being written on her flushed face. She could not endure it any longer and left the dining room.

Mr. Ogden did not notice her departure, and busied himself around the dying man, asking what he could do for him. The poor man pointed to a letter in his side pocket where the addresses of his friends in Dresden were written down.

"The gnomes! . . . the gnomes!" he stammered once more as the shadow of death began to close in upon him. The blood streamed out incessantly, and before the aid of a doctor could be secured, he was a corpse.

## XI.

Mr. Ogden, deeply moved, went to his rooms.

She, the cause of it all, sat at the window with a book in her hands without reading it. There was a look in the woman's face that amazed him, a hard, cold look, that he had never seen there before while the sunbeams fell on her bewitching features and on the green leaves still in her hair.

"I want to leave the place at once," she said without looking at him.

"That poor man's face seems to haunt you, dear tender-hearted girlie," he replied with an outburst of tenderness, taking her in his arms and kissing the handsome face he loved so dearly.

It was a fortunate thing that he was blissfully ignorant of her relation to the dead man.

Gathering up courage—seeing that no suspicion had entered his mind—she raised her beautiful eyes to his languidly.

"Yes, you are right, dear, I cannot stand such horrible things . . . it shocks me," she an-

swered with her accustomed dissimulation in tone and action.

Although she was a great adept in the art of hypocrisy and dissimulation, she could not altogether hide the uneasiness which had taken possession of her. A strange expression came into her eyes, an expression he had never seen there. He looked at her and was puzzled. What was it? What brought the change about? He could not tell.

She turned suddenly and looked out of the window with a stony face, in order to hide, to subdue,—what? Did she conjure up a sinful vision of her own life? No, she would not give in, but she was startled to perceive something within her she did not reckon with: a voice wanted to be heard, no matter how hard she tried to subdue it. It was the voice of motherhood—that feeling seemed to be not quite dead in the heart of the shameless woman. It was Nature's revenge! She had to listen to the voice of Nature, or was it conscience, slowly awakening to life?

Ah! Who would or could fathom the heart of an unscrupulous coquette?

"Had he any family?" she asked, indifferently, avoiding his inquisitive gaze.

"Yes, I think he has a child, here is the address," he replied. "I think it must be with someone he knew, poor unfortunate man. And he gave me this in order to look up his orphan child." A mournful compassion soon stole into his eyes.

"He could not speak any more, but the pitiful glance of the dying man's face told me as much, and I am going to Dresden and see whether I can do anything for his child," he added, looking deeply moved out of the window. She gazed at him with puzzled eyes. "God! if he had an inkling whose child that is!" she thought, remorsefully recoiling a step with down-cast eyes and tightened lips.

Finally summoning up courage enough, she said, hesitatingly, as if fearing any comment:

"Yes, . . . let us stop there on our way to Switzerland."

He wanted to stay until the funeral of the poor lecturer was over, but she would not hear of it. She looked at him with frightened eyes when he made the suggestion.

"I cannot stand such scenes," she replied with quivering lips.

"Well, well! Then we'll go, my sensitive little girlie. That accident seemed to have upset your nervous system," he said with a smile, kissing her tenderly and gazing fondly at her troubled face.

On the following morning they took their departure for Dresden, leaving some money for the funeral expenses in the hands of the hotel keeper.

Instinctively he felt like doing something for the man he had robbed of his happiness without knowing it.

But the unscrupulous coquette loved nobody but herself, knew it, felt it, though without any remorse, that she had betrayed his deep devotion and undying love so shamefully, fearing, in her deceitfulness, only one thing—detection.

The following day a simple hearse, containing the corpse of the poor humorist whose life ended so tragically, went up a lonely hill where the grave diggers had just finished their gloomy work. The coffin was lowered and the grave covered with mother earth. No mourners stood around shedding tears.

The song of a mocking-bird rang from the downy cradle of myrtle blossoms—as a funeral dirge—and a whip-poor-will answered from a cedar in the neighboring woods.

When the night train going to Dresden, rushed by, the little white cross indicating his resting place, looked like a bleached hand of a skeleton shining out with a ghostly radiance across the silent, gloomy plain.

Through the fleecy vapors floating around the lonely hill one with clairvoyant eye may see at midnights the vacillating horde of the tiny gnomes from the Traunstein with downcast torches repeating whisperingly the sad tale, and pointing at the grave, in which the body of the dead humorist, betrayed of his life's happiness, crumbles to dust.

# THE ARTIST



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## I.

The eye of the attentive observer who wanders through Fifth Avenue, and the streets which run into it from right and left, is especially attracted by the houses, built here in the Colonial, there in the Renaissance style. Some of these imposing edifices (often the only reminder of long-vanished fortunes), with their rich facades, afford a striking criterion of the tastes of their builders and of their former inhabitants

In one of these houses, rearing their proud height to the sky, a small lap-dog, bedecked with silken ribbons, sat in a parlor window. He stretched his snowy paws with great satisfaction on the cushioned window-seat, warming himself in the April sun. The luxurious room behind him was quite empty, and the enforced solitude was not at all to the taste of the spoiled pet. It was probably for this reason that he did not find it worth his while to bark in a superior manner at the

pedestrians who appeared on the street, but a look of silent contempt told very plainly that he had made up his mind to consider as extremely unpleasing the movements of a limping street-cleaner who was at the moment just in front of the house.

In fact, the lame man did not look as if he could pretend being favored with a condescending glance by a lap-dog living amidst such sumptuous surroundings.

He looked, too, as if he had had no great practice at his wretched calling—as if he were a novice at it. Although his sickly, sunken features were surrounded by an unkempt grey beard, and his clothing hung loosely about his wasted form, he somehow gave the impression of being an intelligent man of some education, upon whom undeserved misfortune pressed heavily.

The well-fed pet in the parlor window, however, had no conception of undeserved misery, and was about casting to the winds the carefully drilled manners of an educated dog when, fortunately, a well-appointed carriage drew up just as the lame man was preparing to go on his way.

A delicate-looking lady with a kindly face alighted from the carriage, and nodded smilingly to the little dog. The lame street-cleaner had no sooner glanced at the benevolent face of the richly-dressed woman than his emaciated form began to tremble. His face, so pale before, became red, as with humiliation, and in a state of marked agitation he was on the point of dropping his broom and stealing quietly away.

The lady, Mrs. Denison, who had just come from a charitable gathering, and was still under the influence of her charitable mood, felt hurriedly in her purse for a silver-piece, which she instructed her servant to give the lame man as she ascended the broad steps and disappeared into the house.

“I am no beggar!” stammered the street-cleaner in broken English, waving off the proffered alms with a trembling hand.

Within the mansion Mr. Denison, in a faultless evening costume, turned the diamond sleeve-links in the cuffs he was adjusting as he awaited his wife.

Mrs. Denison laid aside her hat and cloak and hastened up-stairs to greet him, beginning at

once to give him a rather feverish account of the doings of the association of which she was president.

Presently another turn was given to the conversation by the entrance of a tall young man with light blue eyes and a rather inexpressive face.

"I am done with racing for the present!" he cried eagerly, holding out his hand.

"Thank heaven!" answered Mrs. Denison, fervently.

"Eh, for once, George," said Mr. Denison thoughtfully.

"And do you know why? My favorite won first place—only think how lucky!" The young man's excitement was perceptible in his panting breath.

"And how delighted Lucy will be! Here she comes now," said Mrs. Denison, turning to kiss the white forehead of her daughter as she entered the room.

Lucy, a pale, thoughtful girl, with large, meditative eyes shaded by gold-rimmed glasses, held out her finely-shaped hand to George Elmore with a forced smile. There was, indeed, very little of

the delight of which her mother had spoken to be seen in her face, although the young man scarcely seemed to notice its absence. Various sports occupied him to such an extent that he never had time to make a study of the girl to whom he was engaged. In addition to his penchant for amusements of the most superficial kind, the gift of observation was entirely lacking in his inflated brain. It was generally supposed that he was very much in love with her, but it was a question whether his affection for his riding-horse was not of a similar nature.

Any one who did observe the pale face of the young girl more closely, however, could not have failed to notice the light quivering of her finely-chiselled nostrils, the nervous motion of her red lips.

In spite of the assumed appearance of calm, which proved the power of her will, it was possible to perceive the existence within her of some deep emotion.

She was standing by the window, the involuntary witness of the alms giving when it had occurred. The lame man in the street was no stranger

to her; she knew his domestic circumstances only too well, and during his stay in the hospital had helped to support his family without confiding the circumstance to her parents. Whether she had omitted to mention it for fear of making herself ridiculous, or from some deeper motive, perhaps she, herself, could not at the present moment have determined.

Lucy breathed a sigh of relief when the dinner was announced, and her *fiance* went away to carry his pleasant news to other friends and acquaintances.

Meanwhile the poor cripple hobbled off to his miserable dwelling. With failing breath he dragged himself over the great distance which lay between him and the lower part of the city, without once raising his eyes from the pavement, suffering and devastating mental torture showing in the feverish glow of his sunken eyes.

## II.

Martin, the lame man, had been brought from Lyons by Mr. Denison, the silk manufacturer, apparently under the most favorable conditions. In the silk factory in New Jersey he had proven himself a most skillful dyer. The Denison wares came to be noted for their likeness to the Lyonese goods, and in a short time, through their similarity to the imported ones, surpassed all that had hitherto been made on this side of the ocean. For this reason the goddess, Fortune, added continually to the Denison stock of worldly treasures.

But the continued pressure of the long work-days began to call forth loud remonstrances from the workmen in the Denison factory. Martin, generally looked upon as being responsible for the improvement in the product was, consequently, hated as being the indirect cause of that pressure.

“I’ll be damned if I work a day longer for such beggarly wages!” cried a red-headed Irish-

man one day, bringing his fist down on the dye-tub with an angry look.

"I can't blame him; he's in the right of it!" answered a second workman.

"A twelve-hour day, and such hard work at that!" cried a third one, leaving his work-bench.

"Right you are!" exclaimed all the others, rolling up their sleeves aggressively.

"If the boss doesn't give us an eight-hour day and higher wages, we quit tomorrow, eh, boys?" cried the angry Irishman, his nose turning from red to purple in his excitement.

Martin had been endeavoring, with ever-increasing earnestness, to calm the excited minds of the workmen, but all that he had been able to say to this end had been laughed to scorn. The next morning he was the only one who appeared at the factory.

At ten o'clock came a deputation of the employees to the office of the manufacturer. Mr. Denison was perfectly willing to agree to a raise in wages, but he would hear nothing of an eight-hour workday, even at the risk of having to stop work for an indefinite period. Orders were com-

ing in day by day. The busy season had just opened and the shutting down of the works would have meant a considerable loss to the manufacturer.

Accordingly, Martin received orders to engage new workmen at once and set them going at their different tasks. The strikers no sooner became aware of this than they began to cast angry glances at Martin.

“Our places to be taken by others?” cried the red-headed Irishman to Martin, in a voice choked with rage, as the latter, weary and worn, prepared to take his way homeward.

“The dog of a foreigner is to blame for it all!” said another with threatening gestures.

This was the beginning. The whole of the brutal crew fell upon Martin, and soon left him lying senseless on the ground. In this state he was carried home. His wife, an intelligent woman, the daughter of a doctor in Basle, and his four children, wept loudly, as the beloved father was carried unconscious into the house. The help of a physician was soon at hand and after a thorough

examination a fracture was discovered in the upper part of the right thigh.

The poor wife tended her unfortunate husband with the entire self-sacrifice of a true woman, keeping up the house as long as possible with what little money she could painfully scrape together.

The eldest son, a youth of twenty-four, who, having regard to his manifest talent, had educated himself to be a painter, was unfortunately unable to find employment just at this time, in spite of his diligent and anxious search for it. To the serious financial situation was added the bitter recognition of the fact that the condition of the beloved sufferer was daily growing worse.

Despair seized the unhappy family. The head of the firm was the only person from whom they might expect help. Accordingly Mrs. Martin decided to go to him as soon as possible, since the factory was to be closed for an indefinite time.

Shyly and hesitatingly she entered the office. The thought of having to confess her dire poverty brought a flood of red to her thin face. No one was in the office but a clerk. To the question as

to whether she could see Mr. Denison he answered with a contemptuous laugh that Mr. Denison had more important business on hand that day, and was visible to no one. Her urgent entreaty to be allowed to see him if only for a moment was in vain. The clerk rudely showed her the door.

During this conversation, Lucy, the recently betrothed daughter of the manufacturer, sat listening in an adjoining room. The continued disturbances at the factory had caused her so much anxiety that she had insisted upon accompanying her father to the works, which she had scarcely visited before since her return from Germany. She had studied for two years at a school in Leipzig, and through the intellectual treasures of German literature and art she had become conversant with nobler pleasures than those which proved so attractive to Mr. Elmore, her *fiance*. Her aspirations for high and beautiful ideals found rich satisfaction in the finer and more artistic pursuits.

She was sitting thoughtfully by the window, looking out at the grey clouds that chased each other across the sky like a troop of headless

ghosts. Her profile was, perhaps, lacking in the classic lines which esthetic laws prescribe for beauty; but a rich spiritual life gave an indescribable charm to her pale countenance.

Her large, meditative eyes seemed shadowed today by a deep melancholy. However she tried to fix her thoughts on George Elmore, the companion of her childhood, to whom, at her parents' wish she had engaged herself, today she found it impossible. Always there arose from the depths of her memory the face of a shy, gentle youth with light, curling hair and deep searching eyes, and the vision made her tremble.

Chance had made them acquainted at the Art School. She had been trying, unsuccessfully, to reproduce the luminous expression of a saint. Her neighbor, watching her conflict with her difficult task, showed, in his shy fashion, his willingness to be of use to her. With a few strokes of his brush he succeeded in catching the desired expression, and at the same time gave her in a hesitating voice an explanation of the picture, and its purpose. He spoke of the light effects which he considered an erroneous conception on the part of

the painter, while the next picture, belonging in part to the school of Rembrandt, reached a happier effect from the depths of the shadows in one place and the heightening of the light in another.

From that time on they worked for hours side by side, he explaining the lights and shadows of each picture with such fullness of comprehension, such a thorough knowledge of history, literature, and art, as to make a deep impression on her mind. Her two years' sojourn in Germany had not been able to efface these art-school recollections. She did not know his name, to say nothing of his social position and still—she could not forget—even now she thought of him—even now his picture thrust itself between her and her *fiance*.

Involuntarily she sprang to her feet to escape those torturing thoughts. Her attention was caught by the sound of low sobbing. She was able to observe through a crack in the partition the distress of poor Mrs. Martin, as the clerk refused her admittance into the manufacturer's private office.

Broken with discouragement and suffering,

Mrs. Martin had scarcely closed the door behind her when Lucy entered the office.

"Who is that sobbing woman?" she asked hastily of the clerk.

"That woman? She is the wife of the former foreman, whom—the strikers—handled somewhat roughly," he answered, hesitatingly, dropping his malicious eyes.

"She wished to speak to papa, didn't she? Why didn't you let her in?" she demanded, frowning.

"Because I had strict orders not to let anyone in today," he replied shortly, suppressing his rebellious feelings.

"Then I must hurry after the poor woman and ask her if there is anything I can do for her," murmured Lucy with quick decision, taking up her hat and cape from an adjoining room.

"I suppose the distinguished Mr. Martin's last dollar's gone," sneered the clerk after her in an Irish accent.

## III.

Lucy hastened after Mrs. Martin, who was still visible in the distance. As the deeply tried woman closed the door of her modest dwelling, a light step made her turn and open it again. She gazed with surprise into the face of the elegantly-gowned girl with the gold-rimmed glasses.

"Does Mr. Martin live here?" the girl inquired in a doubtful voice.

"Yes. Will you be so good as to walk in?" answered the astonished woman. And then with a glance into the room—"Eugene, a lady!" she called to her son.

An inner door opened and Eugene Martin appeared. They stood speechless, gazing in confusion at each other, while white and red chased each other over both of their faces. It was perfectly obvious that they were not strangers to each other; indeed, they had often painted side by side at the Art School. It was the same shy, gentle youth with the dark speaking eyes who had occupied

more of her thoughts than would have been considered advisable for an engaged girl. Nevertheless she struggled to conceal her excitement, and to appear calmly in the character of the purpose which had brought her. But how could she offer alms to this family? No, it would no longer be possible; her sensibilities revolted at this thought, and for the moment she wished even to conceal her name from them.

"I wished to have a picture of my—" she was about to say, "of my *fiance*," without really thinking of him in the least, but a flame of red overspread her face and the word died upon her lips. "—of myself," she substituted. "And I wish it done in oils," she went on in a firmer tone.

Eugene conducted the visitor to the scrupulously clean, though modest, little parlor. In order to reach it they were obliged to pass through the room where his father lay ill, the wild fancies of fever playing antics in his brain. Lucy threw a glance of deep sympathy at the sufferer, visibly moved at the sight of his hollow, ashen face.

The great interest she displayed and the anxious inquiries she made about his father's illness,

filled Eugene's heart with gratitude. He could have knelt before this being from another sphere, to whom he had scarcely dared to raise his eyes, and thank her in that humble way of his for the warm sympathy she bestowed on his sick father.

"I have seen some of your paintings, and—I am quite sure that my portrait will be a success—" began Lucy, stammering again, as she looked at the sketches displayed about the room.

"I should, of course, do my best—to—keep your good opinion of my capability," answered Eugene, with downcast eyes and a hesitating tongue.

Lucy had taken up a portfolio and was turning over its contents, simply to avoid having to meet his glances. She was afraid he might read what was passing in her mind.

"But whether I should be able to satisfy a lady who has so much artistic knowledge—I hardly know," he admitted modestly, "for of late I have not been able to do much except this landscape."

He indicated a picture which hung at the other end of the room, wondering at the flush which had

overspread Lucy's face as she bent over the portfolio, her blood tingling to her finger's ends.

She put down the treacherous portfolio hastily. The exposition of the secret hidden within its covers made her tremble. One of her own drawings, which she had probably thrown away, suddenly met her eyes. It had been enriched by a border of blue forget-me-nots, and as she drew it forth from one of the side pockets she saw, underneath it, written in Eugene's hand, the single word: "Unforgetable."

Her heart beat loudly; still she retained self-command enough to ask in an indifferent tone, when he would be ready to begin the sketch for the portrait, at the same time examining the picture to which he had drawn her attention.

"I should like to know, also, what your price is to be for the execution of the picture," she said, raising her eyes timidly.

He would have been glad to avoid any mentioning of the question of money, but when she insisted, in a hesitating voice, he named a small amount.

"I believe it is customary to pay half in advance," Lucy went on with an embarrassed smile,

handing a fifty-dollar note to the confused Eugene, in spite of his shy protest that he was not in the least hurry about it.

After the day and hour had been fixed for the first sketch of the portrait, Lucy returned to the factory deeply gratified that she had found a way to help the poor woman in her distress. Her father, immersed in business, had scarcely noticed her absence. She would have liked to tell him something of the poverty and illness of his old foreman, but an indefinable feeling of shyness kept her silent. The factory was closed on the same day.

Poor Martin's condition grew visibly worse. On the doctor's recommendation, he was transferred to the neighboring hospital, and the afflicted family reconciled themselves to the inevitable. Although the poor wife had tended him day and night with never-varying devotion, she could not but admit that she was not in a position to give him all that was required by the physician's directions.

Eugene, now the only support of the family, was obliged, in default of anything better, to

take to retouching pictures for photographers. This ill-paid mechanical labor was beginning to have an injurious effect upon his imagination. The day-dreams which had filled his whole soul, anticipating his going to the Eternal City, to receive there the artist's consecration by studying the great masterpieces, he now saw vanishing into comfortless vacuity, replaced by nothing better than the dreamy monotony of earning his daily bread by hard and uninteresting work.

Lucy's meteoric appearance, however, had filled the darkened spirit of the young man with a cheering light. With fiery eagerness he began sketching the dear face which he had never been able to forget. The laboring mechanic disappeared, and the artist, once more awakened, felt his genius glow again with the desire to create. This girl, the very sight of whom made him tremble with joy, must not be allowed to lose her faith in his talent—his artistic capacity. In her eyes he wished to be that, which his dreams had promised he should be—a real artist, even if he were

obliged to strain his powers to the very limit of the unattainable.

At the appointed hours Lucy came, bringing, like Schiller's 'Maiden from a foreign shore,' valuable gifts for his mother, with fruits and toys for the children. To Eugene, however, she brought the most fatal gift—a ray of that unsurpassable bitter-sweet pain which men call love, and which often ends only with life. After she had left the house all trace of her vanished; none of them knew whence she came or whither she went.

With each sitting Eugene grew into a condition of more blissful intoxication, although Lucy, in her refined unapproachableness, gave him not the slightest excuse for such a feeling. Only once he felt her thoughtful eyes resting upon him with an expression which sent the blood coursing madly through his veins.

## IV.

One day when the picture was almost completed he received the following lines from her:

“I am going with my mother to Palm Beach, where we expect to spend a month or two. If my portrait is done before I come back, kindly send it to No. — Fifth Avenue. Remember me to your dear ones.

LUCY.”

A check was enclosed for the balance of the stipulated price.

Eugene felt an icy breath sweep over the glowing love which filled his heart, like the freezing north wind which brings death and destruction in its train, blowing over land and sea and carrying all before it. His artistic powers to strive for the heights of ideals seemed broken; he had no energy left. All was dark and gloomy within him.

“She is rich and I—oh, so poor!” was the thought incessantly in his mind.

In his present position as sole support of his family he could not long give himself up to such unfruitful emotions; he must work in order to provide bread for his mother and the children. And so he tried by hard, incessant labor, by constant occupation, to forget the sweet dream of his brief, imaginary happiness. A bitter feeling of depression rose in him at the thought that the richly-dressed lady must consider him a fool, puffed up with artistic pride; that she thought of him, if at all, with a pitying smile at his presumption.

Thanks to the skillful medical care which Martin shared at the hospital, he was soon on the road to recovery.

"You will have to get used to the idea of having a lame husband the rest of your life," he would say smilingly to his wife, who visited him daily.

"If only your love isn't lame, we shall be all right again," she answered him with simple affection. He wiped away an unobserved tear, and pressed her hand with emotion.

Eugene grew pale and nervous. Seeking forgetfulness in his work he labored day and night

with unwearying diligence, allowing himself no time for rest. In the brief pauses he was obliged to make it obvious, however, that he had not entirely succeeded. Something of pain, of untold suffering, would then steal over his weary face. The nervous strain, continued for weeks, together with the hardly repressed mental conflict, began, little by little, to undermine his constitution, never of the strongest.

It was just a week after his father had left the hospital (with one leg shorter than the other but otherwise in good health) that Eugene fell fainting at his work. In a day or two a severe nervous fever developed. His parents, horribly frightened, did all in their power to aid his recovery.

Martin, though still weak, made haste to hobble to the factory, which, on the termination of the strike had opened as usual, to try for his former position.

“Is Mr. Denison here?” he asked of the book-keeper, who was a stranger to him.

“Mr. Denison has gone to Florida—the date of his return is uncertain,” answered the book-keeper, returning to his interrupted occupation

without paying any more attention to the white-faced cripple who stood leaning against the desk.

“My name is Martin, and I used to be in charge of the dyeing department here,” persisted the anxious applicant, resolved not to be dismissed so easily.

“Every place is filled now, and well filled,” said the book-keeper with a trace of irritation, not looking up from his big ledger; “and anyhow, you may be quite sure there will be no change in the staff as long as the boss is away.”

Crushed and despairing, Martin tottered out of the office. But full of confidence in his ability as a dyer, he decided to go to another factory and offer his services.

His sad, depressed appearance, however, was no good introduction in a place where only strong hands were looked for, so nothing but disappointment awaited him at the other places.

“The strike has ruined business,” said one of the manufacturers, while another laid the blame on over-production. “Come in some other day,” said a third.

During all these unsuccessful attempts to pro-

vide the means of subsistence one week after another slipped away. Now the lack of the barest necessities stared them in the face—bitter need, upon whose hideous features they had not before been forced to look.

And Eugene, in the delirium of his fever, was always talking of the inaccessible maiden from another sphere. His clear-sighted mother began to grasp the meaning of all this with anxious foreboding.

“What’s to be done? What’s to be done?” the poor cripple asked himself, wringing his hands, when he was notified that unless he paid his back rent within twenty-four hours, he and his family would be put into the street.

With despair in his heart he hastened out, and sold everything of any value that was yet left to him in order to avoid this disgrace.

“And then we’ll get out of this unlucky street!” cried the mother, sobbing and wiping the hot tears from her eyes.

After a short family council it was decided to move over to New York.

“No one knows me there; I can get any kind

of employment in New York—and work is easier to find there than it is here," said Martin to comfort his sobbing wife.

A week later found the sorely-tried family in one of the great barracks of tenements in the lower part of the city. As a whole, the neighborhood could not be surpassed for lack of comfort, and little more appeared in the three bare rooms tenanted by the Martin family.

Eugene's condition had improved, although he was still confined to his bed; but the poor father's mind was even more tormented by the fearful spectre of poverty, and yet—in busy, populous New York, surely, there was work to be found!

He was going upstairs one day when he was stopped by a woman who was a stranger to him. She opened an adjoining door, and asked him to step into the room. Her husband was lying there sick in bed and groaning with pain.

"Excuse me," began the woman, "my husband is a street-cleaner—he sweeps Fifth Avenue," she added, with a proud intonation. "For twenty-five years—mind that—he had done his duty; and now the commissioners send for him

today and here he is, sick in bed and can't sweep his Fifth Avenue!" She went on with great loquacity, without paying any heed to the embarrassed face of her new neighbor.

"If you will take his place I will give you his whole day's wages!" she shouted, handing him the money together with the broom.

Martin was unable to resist the fascination of coins so badly needed. The other street-cleaners were waiting down stairs. After the robust woman had communicated the whole affair to them through the window they took Martin into their ranks without any waste of words and marched on before he had time to realize where he was going. Pressing his hat over his eyes he hobbled along with them as well as he could, while actual tears rolled down into his grey beard.

But the thought of coming home at night with the money he had earned soothed him to some extent. His family need never know, and he was not acquainted with another soul in the great city.

How sorely he was hurt by the knowledge that his former employer's wife had seen him at this undignified occupation is already known to the reader.

## V.

On the evening in question Lucy was unusually quiet and absorbed. She had scarcely seemed to understand the loving words whispered in her ear by her lover who sat beside her; she was obliged to force herself, even, to return monosyllabic answers to his questions. Her thoughts were elsewhere. She had only been back from Palm Beach a little while, and had heard nothing from the family in which she was so much interested. But her busy imagination depicted the well-known room which contained the portfolio which had played such a part in her life; and Eugene's fair, curly head, and glowing, longing glances. Then once more, she saw his father with the broom—the almsgiving scene. Her thoughts were incessantly occupied with the son of a street-cleaner!

A burning flush of shame overspread her pale face, which George Elmore accepted as the answer to his tenderly whispered entreaties that she

should become his wife at once, and kissed her hand repeatedly.

The son of a street-cleaner to thrust himself between her and George! Being what she was—a proud woman and an heiress, she was startled.

“How could I so far forget myself!” she reflected. “Heavens! if George were to suspect!”

She tried her best to drive away the embarrassing—nay, the dishonoring thought. The idea struck her as ludicrous—horribly ludicrous, and that disturbed her even more.

Obviously there was but one way out of this labyrinth of tormenting thoughts—to marry as soon as possible. She had a mind to say the decisive word this very evening and appoint, finally the day for the wedding. As George’s wife she would find rest and healing for her stubborn heart in the fulfilment of her duty, and be able to realize how foolish it was to allow it unlimited play outside the bounds of reason. In the meantime the poor family must be helped. In spite of the foundations of reason which she had just laid, she felt an interest in them.

“Nonsense! It is nothing but sympathy for

those unfortunates," she tried to persuade herself. Tomorrow she would have a talk with her father with a view to having Martin restored to his old place in the factory. She would pretend to have gained her knowledge of their circumstances from a friend who had employed their son for a short time.

She could not, however, entirely suppress the pricks of conscience which told her that her silence to her father had delayed this restoration, and had thus been responsible for the complete destitution of these worthy people.

Three days later Martin received orders through a workman in the factory who knew his address to report there with a view to resuming his former position. Accordingly great joy prevailed in the Martin family. Eugene was the only one now, weak and ill as he still was, to remain gloomy and self-absorbed.

A gleam of happier feeling overspread his pale face when he brought out Lucy's picture, now almost completed, and heightened the attractiveness of the cheeks, or made the thoughtful eyes yet more speaking. And then he thought how,

when it was all done, he would seek her out and himself deliver it to her, and once more he resolved to allow the full fascination of her dear presence to work its will upon him.

“And after that, I must avoid her—flee from her! We must be as two stars which cannot tear themselves from their own destined spheres, but are forced to wander each in its own appointed orbit,” he murmured to himself with bitter pain, gazing at the picture with unspeakable dejection.

## VI.

The delicious month of May had now come round once more. Nature, awakening to life, put on its wondrous robe of many colors, and the sun in proud consciousness of its power to tempt with the alluring warmth, the flowers concealed in the mystic bosom of Mother Earth, shone with ever increasing fervency. In Central Park Nature's feathered choir poured forth its gay song into the lovely spring air, while the perfumed lilacs lavished their scent upon all who came, caring not whether the dweller in tenements breathed it in greedily, or whether the superior residents of Fifth Avenue ignored it contemptuously.

In the house of the rich manufacturer the perfume of the lilacs was not missed; the most *recherche* hot-house plants supplanting them in fragrance were artistically grouped on both sides of the great staircase down to the front door, filling all the room with a perfume that bewildered the senses. Servants in livery hastened busily, but noiselessly, about, putting the last touches to the

decorations of the parlor for the wedding ceremony to be performed on this day. In the adjoining room a beautiful altar was visible, decked with superb flowers from which festoons of myrtle ran up to a hanging bell of red and white roses.

Carriage after carriage rolled to the door, from which descended fair guests, arrayed in splendid Worth and Felix gowns, while faultlessly dressed gentlemen helped them to alight.

In her room upstairs stood Lucy, in a white dress and gold-embroidered veil, with orange blossoms upon her bosom. Although apparently calm, she was deathly pale, and her heart, whose feelings had been suppressed with so much difficulty, betrayed itself by violent beating. A nameless uneasiness was upon her, almost suffocating her at times. Eugene's fair head and disquieting eyes were before her mind vividly—now—when in an hour's time she would be the bride of another. More than once she was obliged to have recourse to the smelling-bottle which stood upon the dressing-table, in order not to give way—to be strong enough to bear the torture of the ceremony with dignified calmness.

"The shock to my parents—the society in which I move—no, no, there is no retreat for me!" she murmured with decision in answer to her heart's loud insistence. She was marrying George in fulfillment of her parents' wishes and also to escape from her tormenting self. That in making this decision she had buried the ideals of her youth—her life's happiness, no one should ever guess. It was time now to steer boldly forth into the deep sea of matrimony, deprived forever of her life's compass.

Mrs. Denison, in a costly dress, had repeatedly opened the window and gazed with anxious impatience at all the carriages that came from the lower part of the city, but she saw no sign of their own carriage so impatiently awaited. Mr. Denison had gone down town in the morning, promising to be back before noon, and now it was four o'clock.

Disquieting rumors had already begun to circulate to the effect that the great banking house with which their whole fortune was deposited was on an unstable footing, owing to a rapid fall in the stock market.

Mr. Denison had said nothing of this to his wife, although a horrible agitation had taken possession of him, when, upon leaving the house he had told the coachman to drive at full speed to the banking house.

The guests were all assembled. The clergyman was waiting, but still there was no sign of Mr. Denison. An uneasy whisper, an ever-increasing impatience, could be noticed. Mrs. Denison's thin face took on a feverish red. Elmore's father was just about to telephone down town, when, at last the carriage rolled up to the door. The coachman, excited with overdriving, leaped from his seat and opened the carriage door; but he had no sooner cast a glance into the carriage than he uttered a loud cry, and with unsteady footsteps, hastened to Mrs. Denison.

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Denison, please don't be alarmed—" he panted in a trembling voice, "The big banking house down town failed this morning—and—it seems—Mr. Denison was so fearfully upset—so fearfully—when he came out of the bank his face was all red—and I heard him say in a low voice that he would have to fail too!"

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Yes—and now—please don't be frightened—he's lying dead in the carriage!"

With a loud shriek, wringing her hands and moaning, Mrs. Denison hastened to the carriage. The gentlemen guests carried Mr. Denison's body, still warm, into the house. "Heart failure," said one to another. The women gathered around Mrs. Denison, who was loudly weeping, and tried to console her. Then one by one they stole away, since it was quite obvious that there would be no more thought of the marriage that day.

Lucy, worn out by weeks of mental agitation, was overcome by the sudden shock of this sad news, and fell back without a word upon the sofa, gliding gently from it to the floor. A beneficent unconsciousness clouded her perceptions. No one had time to care for her; all the servants had been sent right and left to bring medical aid for Mr. Denison. All means of restoration were tried, but failed to bring him back to life. "Apoplexy," said the physicians, and silently left the house.

Meanwhile Lucy lay on the soft carpet without a word or motion. In her dazzling white dress, with the gold-embroidered veil, with the marble

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paleness on her face, she looked like a sculptured goddess who had fallen from her pedestal.

The last wedding guests, those who had helped to carry Mr. Denison up to his room, had just driven away, sighing and shaking their heads as they discussed the sad event. The stillness of death settled over the house. Suddenly a sound was heard as of soft footsteps drawing near. Then the door of Lucy's boudoir, which had been left ajar, was gently opened. A curly-headed young man with a disturbed countenance appeared upon the threshold, looking right and left with admiring wonder. The front door was still standing open—no one had found time to close it.

Eugene, bringing Lucy's portrait, had thus been able to penetrate unperceived, to the upper story. Hardly able to believe his eyes, he gazed at the fair form in bridal attire lying upon the floor.

Startled and trembling in all his limbs, he was about to close the door he had just opened, when he caught sight of Lucy's face, pale as death, through the veil. Hastily putting down the portrait, he darted to her side, and trembling with



HE GAZED AT THE FAIR FACE IN BRIDAL ATTIRE  
LYING UPON THE FLOOR



intense excitement, caught her cold hands to his heart.

"Miss Lucy! Miss Lucy!" he cried, at first in a low voice, then louder and more anxiously—but she still lay there, cold and apparently lifeless.

Distracted, he looked about for help. He caught sight of the smelling bottle which Lucy had already used so often. He seized it quickly, pushed aside her veil, and held it to her nostrils.

A slight tremor passed through the beautiful limbs. Lucy moved her hand, but let it fall again. Eugene sprang up joyfully. As if she had been a feather he lifted the girl, now stirring a little. In blissful intoxication, he clasped his heart's ideal for one moment in his arms. Her breath played over his face, making him tremble with delight—carrying him out of himself, so that he pressed his lips to her's, not knowing what he did. "How has this bright creature filled my lonely life with sunshine!" he murmured sadly to himself, as with a deep sigh he laid Lucy on the sofa.

And then,—he felt the soft arms suddenly thrown about his neck. Lucy, still dazed and

dreaming, had forgotten all about her wedding day, and knew nothing of her father's death. Eugene's words of love had roused her from her death-like stupor; she was conscious only of his nearness—of the intoxication of his kiss.

"Oh, Eugene," she whispered, "what a lovely dream!" She still lay with closed eyes. Eugene, speechless with delight, pressed her passionately to his beating heart. Lucy, startled, opened her eyes.

Suddenly George Elmore, his eyes blazing, stood before her, looking down upon her haughtily.

Without losing his self-command in the least he said with cutting scorn, "Oh, I am interrupting a tete-a-tete! We have a lover, have we? Just as well I have found it out in time! Ha, ha! I wish you much happiness—especially as in my own case my family would have to decline the honor of an alliance with a bankrupt's daughter!" Then he bowed coldly and went out.

Lucy, realizing the situation, uttered a cry and attempted to rise, but once again overcome with weakness, fell back with the same marble paleness upon her brow,

## VII.

Mr. Denison's funeral had already taken place some weeks. Nearly every day Lucy had been seen dressed in deep mourning, crossing to New Jersey. In her firm serious face decision showed itself as, hour after hour she bent over big ledgers, separating debts from assets, while the bookkeeper stood by her side to offer her any assistance in his power.

After a long and searching examination, it became evident that the firm need not absolutely declare itself insolvent, since the great banking house in Wall Street whose reported failure had brought the catastrophe to the Denison household, had recovered itself, thanks to a favorable turn in the stock-market, and promised to reimburse all its creditors.

The Martin family, after all the severe trials it had undergone in New York, had moved back to New Jersey. Through the proved usefulness of old Martin, who now labored with redoubled

eagerness to produce new and unheard of combinations of color, the prestige of the factory, which had sunk low in the silk market, now began to rise again to its former height.

Lucy and her mother, selling their fine house on Fifth Avenue, had also moved to New Jersey, in the vicinity of the works, since Lucy insisted upon superintending everything herself. She trembled with impatience and joy when Eugene's fair curly head was seen approaching the house.

On the expiration of her year of mourning she gave her hand to the man to whom her heart has long been given.

The happy couple spent their honeymoon in Italy. The high ideals which had once inflamed the young painter's heart, and later had threatened to die out in comfortless annihilation, were destined at last to take shape, and to stand before his enchanted eyes in all their beautiful reality. At last he was able, hand in hand with his beloved, to admire the art treasures of Rome, the Vatican, with its immortal paintings by Raphael, Michael Angelo and Paul Veronese. All that they had long known through copies and engravings were

now before them in the original, and filled them with delight.

Eugene availed himself of the permission given to artists three days in the week to make copies in the Vatican galleries. Standing at their easels, Eugene and Lucy painted side by side, as they had once done at the Art School, with unbounded happiness beaming in their eyes. Among the masterpieces which represented the highest ideals of art, Lucy realized more and more with a palpitating heart, the omnipotence of true love.



# **THE STREET SINGER**



# THE STREET SINGER

## A VIENNESE STORY

### I.

Winter, hard and merciless as a tax collector, stalked threateningly before the dilapidated doors of Vienna's poor.

Back of the white Tanneries, not far from the magnificently built Franz Josef's bridge, where misery and dire poverty had made their dreary home for many decades, winter seemed harder and colder than elsewhere; for with the poor wretched creatures who dwell near these Tanneries, there is—as everybody knows—but little sympathy.

A sweet-looking girl, hardly fourteen years of age, came shivering with bent head, out of one of the poorest and dirtiest homesteads of the poverty-stricken district.

Her thin, threadbare gingham dress, torn in many places, exposed here and there the trembling little form beneath. Over it she wore an old, shabby-looking plaid shawl—apparently her moth-

er's—which blown back now and again by the unceremonious wind, exposed to view an old violin. She held it as tight as if it were the only earthly treasure she possessed. A ribbon, that had once been blue, held up her knotted hair, and gave her the appearance of a gipsy. And as for her shoes, it would seem that only the upper part had preserved a right to the name; for her stiff-frozen little toes were almost on the ground.

She walked on and on, greatly oppressed, giving no heed to the cruel wind that played havoc with her fluttering curls. Her large black eyes, which held a singular fascination in their sparkling depths, were now filled with burning tears.

She was barely on the threshold of girlhood, but life in its unfathomable savagery, had already thrown its challenging gauntlet in her frightened, childish face. She felt instinctively that poor little outcast as she was, she must not shrink from battle, but struggle on as best she could either with cruel wind and weather or with bitter cold and want.

She had struggled bravely, never minding how fruitless her little efforts seemed. But the one

thing to which she had never accustomed herself, and which made a storm of tears rain down her pale face, was the frightful apparition of the hollow-eyed skeleton, hunger—that hunger which now held sway over her sick mother's house.

A heavy, shuddering sigh broke from her lips. The utter need and helplessness of her mother and four smaller sisters, for days deprived of all necessities of life, even of bread to satisfy their hunger, had driven her from the house, their cries and lamentations still ringing in her ears.

“Poor and friendless, with no one to care for us, and poor, dear mother lying ill,” she moaned in a suffocating voice, wiping tears of agony from her white face. “It wrings my heart to see her and the little ones so hungry,” she said to herself, sobbing aloud.

Near the Franz Josef's bridge she saw a little tavern. She timidly opened the door and entered, quickly producing the old violin. The instrument was the only bequest of her dear father, who had been a musician, and who had instructed her in this art, detecting at an early age her ardent love of study and thirst for a musical education.

Standing near the open door, she first played an obligato which she executed in masterly fashion, and then commenced to sing an old German song, so touchingly—knowing what was at stake—that the people in the tavern, and many passers-by who stopped in amazement at the door, gazed with wondering eyes at the ragged little dark-eyed girl hardly grown out of her baby shoes; and many of them, moved by deep pity, though poor themselves, tossed one, and some of them two coins into her apron. More they could not afford to give, lest their liberality might eventually expose them to the same plight.

Christine beamed with happiness. When her song was finished, she quickly took out of her apron her gathered treasure, counting it with shining eyes. Twenty kreutzers—she counted them again and again. Her stiff little fingers could not hold all at once, but her eyes, wet with happy emotion, were fastened on each of them, and her heart leaped within her at the sight. So many she had never before earned.

She folded her hands as if in fervent prayer,



"HERE, MISS, I AIN'T GOT NO MONEY, BUT I'D LIKE  
TER GIV YER THEM SHOES."



and lifted her dark eyes to Heaven in gratitude, thinking of the joy she would bring to her mother and half-starved sisters when she returned home with an apron-full of fresh baked rolls.

"Say,—Miss—won't ye let me carry yer-fiddle?"

The whisper sank into her ear. She turned hastily around, and saw a poorly-dressed shoemaker's apprentice standing near, gazing at her with his large blue eyes. In his hands he held an old pair of shoes.

He stood, quite silent, with enthusiasm for Christine's exquisite singing beaming from every feature. Presently, with a timid grin, he held out the pair of shoes.

"Here, Miss. I ain't got no money, but I'd like badly ter give you them shoes—er—ter show you that I like good singing. Yes, I do, an' ye sing mighty well," he said, looking admiringly at her and getting as red in the face as an over-ripe apple. "I'll surely get a good cuff or two from master for giving them away, but a shoemaker's boy is used to that, and doesn't care a rap if once in a while he takes a good piff, paff, pouff!"

With this exclamation of Meyerbeerian bravado, he demonstrated the operatic knowledge of an up-to-date Viennese apprentice.

Christine looked at him with shining eyes. She understood only one thing—that he wanted to give her a pair of shoes, which, in her estimation seemed almost new. She beamed at him so gratefully with her large, dark eyes, that the embarrassed apprentice, who was about two years older than she, felt a hot wave running down his spine. Never had a lovelier face or sweeter eyes smiled so kindly at the bewildered boy.

“They’re yours, an’—ye’d better try ‘em on—an’ see if they’ll fit,” he stammered bashfully. This strange, heavenly shyness was a new sensation for the rough apprentice lad. Until this moment he had never known that there existed such an organ as a palpitating heart within his body.

And before Christine knew how, the new shoes were on her feet. Shoes without holes! Goodness! how could it have happened? And without holes!

"I hope I am not dreaming," she murmured to herself, her face aglow.

"Will ye let me go with ye?" asked the simple-hearted boy, his eyes downcast.

"No—not now; but—on Sunday you can come."

"To yer house? My name is Peter," he replied, greatly bewildered, as he could not think—to save his soul—of anything more important than his name.

"Yes, to my house; and then you can go with me and carry the violin," Christine answered with a sweet smile. But suddenly, ashamed of her boldness, she stopped and counted her kreutzers again.

Peter, however, looked at her with such admiration in his big blue eyes, that something like an electric spark shot through her. Such a happy sensation she had never felt; for no one had ever spoken such kind, encouraging words to her. A tinge of red leaped into her pale cheeks; there was a trembling pant in her voice, when, with averted face, she told him the street and number.

Tucking her violin under her arm, she ran quickly up the street.

At the nearest bakery she stopped in order to buy the coveted rolls. But Peter, still under the charm of her large, expressive eyes, stood as if rooted to the ground, gazing after her and listening to the receding tap-tap of the little shoes on her feet, which he now realized belonged to some one else. He began to dread the expected punishment, which he knew would be meted out, not so much in curtain lectures as in striking actions, and for some time he stood stock still, racking his brain for an excuse to make their singular disappearance plausible. But his natural light-heartedness soon got the better of him. Shrugging his shoulders, and singing "Piff, paff, pouff, brennet sie," he rushed away, ready to meet his inexorable fate.

## II.

"Goodness! you haven't eaten anything all day long, and I bet you're feeble," cried Mrs. Langohr, the next-door neighbor of Christine's mother, throwing the door of her miserable two-room apartment wide open, so that all the neighbors should hear, and praise her charitable inclinations. "O, my God, have mercy on them poor little worms! I must go and make a little farina soup for 'em. See, that's what I am getting out of the Bible! Be good to yer neighbor," she said in a loud tone, apparently for the benefit of the poorly-clad and shy-looking women at the windows.

"O, holy Father in Heaven! Just look here," she screamed, amazed when Christine suddenly appeared with twenty hot rolls in her apron, showing them triumphantly to the neighbors. And rushing into the apartment, she, with a gladdened heart, distributed them among the starving children.

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The feeble mother with eyes full of tears, glancing thankfully toward Heaven, listened to Christine's wonderful story about the shoes and the twenty kreutzers. It seemed incredible. So much happiness in one day! And Christine's beautiful smile seemed to fill the squalid room with radiance when she thought of Sunday and the expected arrival of the shoemaker's bashful boy.

Her happiness increased day by day; for every Sunday Peter punctually arrived, always bringing some unusual delicacies with him, and accepting gladly Christine's consent to carry the violin. In fact, he carried it with such dignity and pride, that, standing behind her, it often happened that he bowed his acknowledgment to the audience at the end of each morceau, quite as if he were her partner and one of the performing artists. Then he would take his old cap and gather the contributions, always returning them faithfully to Christine. Every piece of wood that he could deftly worm out of his mistress' household, he carried to Mrs. Miller, Christine's mother, to warm the chilled little limbs of her starving children.

His mistress, the shoemaker's wife, often wondered that the cooked potatoes disappeared from the dinner table as suddenly as if the earth had swallowed them up. She certainly could not imagine that they invariably disappeared into Peter's side-pockets although his occasional grimaces and the red spots on his sensitive skin bore open testimony.

"Now, now, goodness! what's the matter with you, rascal?" the surprised mistress would cry, viewing amazedly his distorted face. And one day, in spite of his Spartan heroism, Peter could not stand it any longer.

"I am sick—stomach-ache—" he stammered, vainly trying to compose himself, and even forcing a sickly smile to his pale lips.

"You grown-up earthworm, you! The idea of having stomach-ache every day at this time!" she responded angrily, adding a few choice words out of her voluminous vocabulary. But being not bad at heart, sympathy soon gained the upper hand, and she said in a milder tone, giving him a small coin with a gesture indicative of large liberality—

“Here, you stupid nuisance, you! Go and get a penny’s worth of English bitters.”

Peter did not require a second command to leave the room. He took the hint and the penny and went straight to Christine’s house. But once outside, and in respectable distance from his mistress’ observing eyes, he quickly removed the red-hot potatoes from his pant’s pockets.

Peter had always been accustomed to save the tips that he received from his master’s patrons when he carried home their shoes—chiefly for Sunday nights, that he might enjoy a seat in the last gallery at the theatre. And my! hadn’t he been proud and happy when sitting there in his best well-worn suit, and hearing those wonderful songs, “*Belle Helene*,” in Oppenbach’s toneful operetta, and others which he could not get out of his head for months.

Sometimes, if he had any money left, he would indulge in such luxuries as a half herring and a glass of Pilsner, being a great gourmand. But since he had come to know Christine, everything seemed to have changed. He no longer went to

the theatre, but saved all his tips, and went about as if a secret were hidden in his breast.

"Oh, Mrs. Langohr," cried Christine's mother, one cold morning to her next-door neighbor. "Don't laugh, for it is true. Peter has bought a dress for Christine, a winter dress, just imagine!"

Mrs. Langohr held up her hands in amazement. But it was really true. Peter had bought Christine, with his savings, a warm dress, at a second-hand store. Christine was beside herself with joy; she had never known in these days what it was to have a warm rag on her back, and her gratitude welled up and overflowed in her sparkling eyes.

As Christmas-time gradually approached, Mrs. Miller, feeling much better in health, commenced to perform her household duties. But Christine's earnings from her singing and violin diminished as the holidays drew near, and the simple little income seemed about to vanish altogether. Even Peter's pour-boire money threatened to cease, causing him restless nights

and much down-heartedness. This discouraging condition of things took all his former desire for playing pranks out of the formerly gay-spirited shoemaker's boy.

And when pious processions of tired pilgrims passed through the streets of Vienna, singing and praying on their way to church, he no longer played any of his old mischievous tricks on them, but took off his hat devoutly, and marched along, praying with folded hands and wet eyes.

“Blessed Virgin—be good to her—I pray to thee—but not for myself—no; only for Christine —she lives under the white Tanneries—only for her I pray!”

## III.

A chilling north wind whistled through the deserted streets of the Austrian metropolis, and the snow, towering mountain high, driven by the gale, whirled blindingly around the muffled, shivering pedestrians, hastening hurriedly to their respective homes.

The Franzenering, where the Viennese aristocrats are accustomed to meet in the afternoon hours, to drink tea, consume little cakes and indulge in gay conversations, to-day was totally empty. No one, it seemed, had ventured to brave the storm, in spite of the attractive display in the show-windows of elegantly designed gowns and hats. And these same show windows were certainly remarkable, for all adornments dear to the feminine heart, wonderful achievements of unusual millinery effects, dazzled the eyes of both young and old.

Christine, holding her violin with stiffened little fingers, stood pale and trembling before one

of the most magnificent windows, speechless with wonder, gazing as if in a trance at this modern splendor of feminine attire, the like of which she had never conceived even in her wildest, most fantastic dreams.

Her heart contracted painfully. She thought of her mother and little sisters, freezing, half-starved, hopelessly expectant of Christmas, and her glorious eyes blurred with tears, as she remembered that she, as the bread-winner of the family, was not able to buy them anything for Christmas, not even bread enough to satisfy their hunger. For the first time in her life, she could not think of God and Heaven without bitterness for it seemed that he had indeed forsaken her and her family.

"O God, I thought I was doing my best," she stammered with burning tears running down her blanched face. "What have we done, that we of all others, should die of hunger?" The future stretched before her inner vision, a weary blank, lit by no ray of hope. Convulsively, she clutched the old violin, and wandered away, farther and farther into the raging storm, drifting wherever

the wind blew, without aim and without purpose or hope.

The north wind in its increasing fury, commenced to batter tin roofs, chimney-tops, blinds, awnings, flag-poles, as if a giant hand were at work, while odds and ends of debris fell crashing into the streets to bury themselves in the drifts. Those unfortunates who were compelled to brave the elements, fought their way onward like wild beasts, cursing, shouting and screaming aloud.

Half-frozen, nearly blinded by the storm and the hail that cut her delicate face like a knife, Christine suddenly found herself before the open portal of a palatial house. Driven by a momentary impulse for shelter from the cold, penetrating blast, she entered. At once a ray of hope illumined her desolate face. Now, if she were to try once more, and sing for these rich people, warm and comfortable behind those windows!

Quickly she withdrew her violin from its battered case, and began in quivering tones to sing the Lorelei her father had taught her, before anyone was aware of her presence. The wonderful tones of her high soprano rang through the state-

ly mansion, vibrating clear and penetrating all the rooms.

"Here, here, the impertinence!" cried the irritated porter, jumping out of his porter's lodge, pale with anger, and pointing to a sign conspicuously hanging in the entrance of the spacious porte-cochere. "How dare you, mean little baggage, you! Can't you see that beggars and organ-grinders are not allowed to enter here? Heh! screaming at the top of her voice in such weather! Get out! get out! quick! march!" His tone was sneering, and his lips curled contemptuously as he waved his hand disdainfully for her to leave the courtyard.

Greatly frightened and trembling in all her frozen little limbs, Christine was about to obey, and covered her violin, timidly looking at the porter's ugly red face, when suddenly a window on the first floor was flung open. The elegant form of a middle-aged man, with gold-rimmed eye-glasses, leaning out of the window, gave the porter so imperious a command to withdraw at once, that the startled man, hardly daring to lift his eyes to this illustrious personage, retired

with many a bob and scrape to his porter's lodge.

Christine, greatly encouraged by this incident, and anxious to use the opportunity, began to sing anew; for she thought that if she won the favor of the man at the window, it must surely mean help for her sorely-tried family. So she sang the Lorelei again—sang overpoweringly those lovely, mystic notes—“Das hat mit threm singen die Lorelei gethan.”

The superb sound burst forth from the little shivering form, rocked here and there by the raging storm, and seemed to breathe the longings and distress of a pure childish soul. This piteous appeal for help through the medium of Listz's greatest legendary love-song, was not without effect.

“Superb—a phenomenon—a star!” murmured the man at the window in amazement. He leaned out into the storm, gazing intently at the young singer, for he was no less a personage than Duke Holenlohe, the greatest musical critic and enthusiast in all Vienna. He withdrew from the window, closing it with a snap.

Christine was speechless with joy, and her

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dark, glowing eyes flashed in excited bewilderment when a richly liveried butler came down the stairs into the courtyard, handing her five gulden and demanding her address. She stood there—her face flushed with wonder, and her childish lips parted as if hearing the magic music of another world. Cyclones of wind, thundering waves of ice and snow were forgotten. Hope had entered her heart, and with the five gulden clasped tightly to her breast, she made her way out of the courtyard, past the porter's lodge into the street. She hurried along as best she could, her heart singing a holy song of gratitude, and her lips smiling at the thought of the happiness she was bringing to those at home. The last part of the way she ran and burst into the room where the family were huddled over a few half dead coals, like a childish almoner of plenty, stammering out her tale.

"It must have been the Lord holy, Jesus Christ, who had mercy on me and my children," cried the invalid mother, trembling with excitement, and folding her thin hands devoutly. "O Lord," she continued, "most mighty and most merciful Saviour of all the widows and orphans,

accept the lowly thanks of a poor invalid." She looked up to Heaven with a gladdened heart as she saw her children happy, and for once, well-fed.

But Christine sat in a corner of the poorly furnished room as if in a dream. A vague, confused remembrance of all that had happened in the courtyard filled her with bewilderment. The only thing she really saw plainly was the joyous faces around her, the result of her gift—the five gulden she had received.

## IV.

The whole neighborhood was in an uproar. A score of tongues were wagging, ears were cocked to hear the news, and gesticulations and cries were everywhere. Even the invalids of the white Tanneries with their ridiculous looking caps, stretched their shaky heads out of the windows in order to listen to the great news related by Mrs. Langohr, the wandering gossip-monger of this poverty-stricken district.

"A real Count has heard her on Christmas Eve, you say?"

"A Count! Naw! Something higher up, smarty," snapped the gossip-monger, raising her voice to a shrill pitch and throwing herself into the proper attitude of importance. "It was a Duke if you want to know it. Yes, he heard her, and yesterday sent his carriage for her."

"His carriage!" echoed the crowd, and fell back amazed, unwilling to trust their own ears.

"With four white horses attached to it,"

added Mrs. Langohr with a triumphant laugh.  
“A girl from our suburb, imagine!”

“Hump! that’s a greater miracle than the stories of the returning Pilgrims from Rome,” sniffed an old, wrinkled woman, shaking her ludicrously shaped head with a certain vehemence and “soit disant” dignity which eminently befitted one enjoying the reputation of the female Socrates of the suburb.

The nightcaps at the windows commenced to shake visibly, and a heated argument of possible reasons for this exciting event followed.

“What will he do with her?” asked the female Socrates with solemnity, wiping each wrinkle separately with a dubious-looking red handkerchief, a sign that she intended to cross-examine everybody rigidly.

“What he—the Duke will do? He will make a great singer out of her, smarty,” sneered the next-door neighbor, disappearing quickly indoors, to the great disappointment of the neighbors who had gathered for the purpose of hearing the great news at first hand with all the details.

“A great singer?” asked the shaky nightcaps

at the windows, with dubious smiles, ignorant of what had gone before, and looking in blank amazement at each other. “Who—who is he?”

But so it had actually happened.

Christine had attracted first the attention, then the interest of Duke Hohenlohe, and had been placed in the Vienna Conservatory of Music. Here, as a protege of one of its principal patrons, she was being carefully instructed by the most prominent singing teachers of the institution, and making extraordinary progress.

But poor Peter! He had become so downcast at the loss of his little friend, that he cared nothing for even the merriest of his former pranks, and spent his time in counting the days until he could see her again. He had promised Christine before she had gone to the Conservatory, to help her family in every way he could, and what Peter promised, he kept faithfully. But, oh! how dear Christine had become to him—how necessary to his very existence! He gladly deprived himself of even the barest necessities of life in order to be of service to her and the mother and sisters she loved.

Now—in the few months that she had been living near the Conservatory, how tall and beautiful she had grown, and what depths of expression lay in her dark, speaking eyes! Goodness! the simple-hearted shoemaker's boy felt his heart leap and tremble, when he dared to look into their sparkling wells of light, they followed him whether he waked or slept.

He saw them in his grimy little shop, talked to them when he was sewing on buttons, or knocking vigorously at the hard, unresponsive leather, and smiled happily at the visionary picture always before his mind's eye, to the great astonishment of his observing mistress.

So five years sped by—five years which seemed five eternities to Peter's love-sick heart. But these five years had developed the pretty, sad-eyed girl into a beautiful, graceful woman, with a clever vigorous intellect, and an ambition to reach the highest eminence within the grasp of true womanhood and constant endeavor in the world of song.

So there was but little time to give poor Peter, as her approaching debut was near, and Christine

studied night and day, with tireless energy, the important roles which she would be expected to portray.

In the meantime, dark clouds were gathering on the horizon of the Austrian monarchy. Rebellion after rebellion broke out on the southern frontier of its vast dominions, and Peter, now of age, was enlisted as a soldier, and sent away to the centre of the insurgent provinces. He had to march with his regiment in the darkness of the night without even being able to see Christine to utter a few parting words. He was heart-broken, though what he wanted to tell her was not known even to himself. All he knew was that he loved her dearly, and that his tortured, love-sick heart was writhing and bleeding at the thought that months and months would pass before he could again set eyes on her slender, graceful figure, and lovely smiling face.

The ensuing scenes of war and bloodshed sickened him; but Christine's hallowed picture, always with him, gave him strength to withstand all horrors. She appeared as the radiant star of his life, and he was guided in his loneliness by the

single hope of seeing her again. Perhaps the ignorant simple lad covered his face and wept—wept tears of despair and joy in anticipating that inexpressible happiness which the future might hold in store.

## V.

To the music-loving public of Vienna, first nights and debuts of promising students are great events, especially when the aspirants for musical honors come from the home conservatory, and more especially when a certain student of the conservatory is heralded as a singer with a phenomenal voice, which she will display in the famous role of Lucia di Lammermoor.

So it was that long before the doors of the imposing opera house were opened, eager crowds excitedly discussing the appearance of the new singer, stood at the entrance impatiently awaiting the hour. And before the portals had been thrown open half an hour, the great house was filled to suffocation.

Many of the Austrian nobility sat in their private boxes, and those persons belonging to the aristocracy occupied seats in the parterre and, in fact, every available place. The people, dangerously crowding the galleries, looked in open-eyed

wonder at the stage where Christine, in the costume of Lucia stood trembling with shy timidity. A vague terror overshadowed her lovely features. She was endeavoring heroically to enter into her role, but the sight of so many people, whom for the first time she saw assembled, and the countless number of eager eyes riveted on her, made her dizzy. She lost her courage, and stood there helpless and frightened with downcast eyes, unable to commence, in spite of the fact that the nervous stage manager in the wings had already twice given her the cue.

The director of the conservatory stood in the wings at the opposite side of the stage, and nodded encouragingly to her. But as she seemed not to see him, he became livid, and wrathfully commenced to revile himself for having yielded to the temptation of bestowing this difficult role on Duke Hohenlohe's protege, who evidently was not sufficiently trained in self-control to appear as an independent star.

Just at the decisive moment, however, Duke Hohenlohe entered the proscenium box and smiled kindly at her. Christine's fingers closed spasmod-

ically over each other. She perceived at last what was at stake.

With eyes full of tears, she controlled herself by a superb effort, and looked up at him as if saying: "You may trust me. I shall be equal to the situation," and then she began to sing, at first timidly and tremulously, but soon carried away by the grandeur of this passionate role, she surpassed herself; her high notes echoed through every part of the vast opera house with such dazzling magnificence, that an uproarious "Bravo," rang vociferously forth from thousands of voices, and thousands of hands applauded wildly.

And when she had rendered the great bravura aria in the second act, with rare perfection, a continuous storm of applause greeted her. Duke Hohenlohe smiled with gratification. He was indeed proud of his little protege, whom he had discovered in the blinding snow storm.

The director of the Conservatory, still standing in the wings, could not believe his eyes and ears. Christine was not only a great singer, but she had proved herself a great actress. The manner in which she had portrayed the mad Lucia was

an immense surprise. Flowers and bouquets of all sizes and colors flew from all directions upon the young debutante. Curtseying timidly, her lovely face flushed and happy beyond description, she looked at the corner in the second gallery where Mrs. Miller sat praying with folded hands, as if in a trance.

"Mother—dear Mother," she murmured to herself, with profound humility, and disappeared.

The Duke Hohenlohe had just entered the imperial box where sat the Emperor. With a reverential bow, and a look of great satisfaction on his noble face, he said smilingly:

"Your Majesty, it was I who discovered the new star."

"Indeed? Tell me how," responded his Majesty, greatly interested.

"I happened to listen to her singing on Christmas Eve. She stood in my courtyard with an old broken violin and shivered with cold; and when she sang the Lorelei, the snow circled around her wretched little form. It was a pity."

"Duke, you have aroused my curiosity. Can I—?"

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"See her? Oh, your Majesty—the great honor—she will be overwhelmed," the Duke replied, bowing deeply as he withdrew from the imperial box.

An instant later, Christine, greatly confused and flattered by the request of the Emperor, stood in his presence and received his hearty congratulations. As if in a dream she glanced at the second gallery where her mother still sat, and wept tears of joy. The Emperor cordially extended his royal hand, which she was permitted to kiss before retiring. The following day the success of the new star as Lucia was heralded over the city. The leading journals contained long articles about her magnificent rendering of the difficult role, and the beauty of her voice, at the same time, complimenting the committee of directors of the Imperial Opera House for this opportunity given to native talent, thus making an exception to the general rule that prophets are not recognized in their own country.

## VI.

"Your first appearance was a triumph that will live in the memory of Vienna, my dear Christine. In fact, your magnificent rendering of a role which only such singers as Patti, Sembrich and Melba have attempted, has exceeded all expectations. Candidly, I had commenced to blame myself for having yielded to the wishes of Duke Hohenlohe," said the director of the Conservatory with a radiant smile, as he entered Christine's simple four-room apartment, a day later. "And I am most glad to have been commissioned by the Board of Directors to offer you a three years' contract with a suitable salary—but, my dear girl, what is the matter?"

Christine stood before him pale as a ghost. A slight tremor shook her slender frame, her eyes were downcast and red with weeping. She stammered a few words which the director could not understand.

He scrutinized her face sharply, being wholly

puzzled, as he endeavored to fathom the true cause of this state of mind.

"Pardon me, my dear girl, if I express my surprise. I hope you are not dissatisfied with your debut. Why, you ought to be singing rhapsodies—be filled with ambition and enthusiasm—after being received by his Majesty and complimented upon your remarkable success."

Without replying, her lips quivering and dumb, Christine slowly and solemnly opened the door of the adjacent room. A mysterious, oppressive something seemed to fill the room like the shadow of death.

In the centre was a catafalque, at the end of which stood two lighted candles, sputtering lightly like the last feeble shrieks of a departing soul. Near the catafalque, on a small pedestal, rested the picture of poor Peter, embedded in a mass of roses.

The autumn sun, shining through the lilac and myrtle boughs that rustled close to the window, glinted over the pure, pale face of the singer. Mournfully, her tearful eyes sought the object of her deep devotion. On a black velvet cushion near

Peter's picture, stood a pair of old shoes surrounded by jasmine and white camelias. A ray of sunshine stealing through the myrtle leaves made golden ripples on the shoes.

Christine pressed her hand to her heart, as if beholding that scene in the tavern of her childhood days. "Not yesterday," she said to the director in a trembling voice—"not yesterday, but five years ago I made my debut as a singer, when I earned these shoes in recognition of my singing—from him—" She pointed to Peter's picture, almost overcome by emotion.

"I sympathize most keenly with you, but my dear girl, what are they?"

"They are my only mementoes of my dear friend Peter, who lost his life in the service of the Empire—the first victim of the terrible rebellion at the Southern frontier. She stopped, unable to continue, while her heart contracted painfully, and big tears of sympathy and love for the shoemaker's apprentice trickled down her blanched face.

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Christine is now one of the greatest opera stars

on the horizon, and her sisters are following in her footsteps. But every year when the sad day of poor Peter's death comes, Christine, clothed all in black, goes out to the cemetery with flowers in hand, and sits for hours under the pure white marble obelisk where, in gilded letters, these words are traced:

*ERECTED IN HONOR OF PETER STARK,*

*By his devoted, sorrowing friend,*

*CHRISTINE.*

**CONCETTA**



# CONCETTA

## AN ITALIAN NOVELETTE.

### I.

Many large and small boats were dancing merrily on the Bay of Castellamare, so richly populous with many rare species of fish. The mirror-like blue surface was only ruffled by the small steamers on their way to and from Sorrento, carrying throngs of pleasure-seeking tourists from all parts of the world.

On the right hand shore, extended on a high promontory receding a little from the shore, stands peacefully dreaming and forgotten, by the outer world, the little village of Vico Ecquenso.

The innumerable small fishing smacks belonging to the villagers ("paesani") dot the bay as far as Castellamare, and every morning they make their way thither, carrying to market their nightly catches of tunny fish, anchovies and other dumb subjects of Neptune.

The valleys, perfumed throughout their length with odorous herbs, palms and gigantic cactus in wild profusion, change their character a little

further away, by taking on the indescribable charm of the picturesquely draughted olive trees, which often slope down to the water's edge, while on green hillside terraces most magnificent grapes gleam from afar, like red glittering rubies to the eyes of the delighted tourist.

On the left side, amid palms and chestnut trees, one catches a glimpse of the lifeless unroofed ruins of Pompeii, once a populous city, which was overwhelmed by her mighty neighbor, the terrible Vesuvius on the 22nd of August in the year 79, and remained under ground for about eighteen centuries, until Charles the III ordered its excavation on the 1st of April, 1748. Amid all these buried treasures of art of long perished races, Seneca had spent his youth and Cicero had written his biting rhetorical masterpieces, which earned him a sixteen months' banishment from the court of the Emperor Claudius, whose gigantic statue of Persian marble, in the robe of "Pontifex Maximus" was lately excavated at Pesto.

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The high mountains were already casting long shadows through the little village of Vico

Ecquenso, and the hot evening sun, now about to sink into the gently splashing waves, gilded with its last beams the weather-beaten, centuries-old convent of Santa Croce, built upon a high summit on green hilltops.

The peaceful sound of the old convent bell, inviting those to pious meditations and evening prayer, was sounding now with wondrous sweet-ness over land and sea, even as far as the desolate altars of the heathen Gods of Pompeii tumbled down from their gilded pedestals, and the shrunk-en mummies in the “*theatrum tragico*,” where the people perished without the help of the heath-en gods, listened dumb and petrified,—the sight-less eyes wide open,—to the sounds of the new re-ligion calling them again and again morning and evening. The vast oppressiveness of the ghostly solitude there, contrasted strangely with the un-common bustle perceptible that evening among the simple minded inhabitants of the quaint little vil-lage, who usually went so quietly about their work.

A joyous excitement sparkled in the eyes of both old and young, who had assembled in front of the only village tavern, “*Osteria*,” to witness

the approach of the festal procession of youth and maidens coming home from the vineyards, laden with baskets of grapes and flowers.

The wealthiest man in the place, the farmer Niccola Gallioti, who had just before devoutly lit six immense wax candles in honor of the Holy Madonna, was today giving a feast to the young people of the place. The ingathered harvest had filled all his granaries to the roofs and so surpassed all his expectations that it had to be celebrated with eating and drinking, music and dancing. An hour before, he had been seen walking up towards the vineyards at the side of his beautiful daughter, Concetta, and as yet there was no sign of their return. The expecting crowd shuffled up and down impatiently, and craned their necks.

“There! There! Corpo di bacco! they’re coming now,” cried a small bare-footed lazzaroni, greatly excited, running breathlessly to meet them, and vainly trying at the same time to hold up the torn, shapeless breeches, which actually had no right to that name. They were fastened by a cord on the top and reached from the shoulders to his feet.

All the inhabitants of the village seemed to be present, and pressed forward in a confused mass, each one anxious to be the first one to greet the festal train, principally Galiotti the liberal host and dispenser of the best wine.

In the rear, unobserved, stood a man of about twenty-eight years, in an elegant summer suit, apparently belonging to a better class, looking sneeringly at the great excitement of the "Paesani."

His dark, sparkling eyes, encased in blue-shaded rings, had a demoniacal glitter. He was a tall, athletic man, with a constant sneer on his red lips. The fairly chiseled lineaments were blotted by dissipation, and blackened and distorted by the baleful fire of fierce passions. The bushy eyebrows, that nearly met each other, were of the kind to exercise an uncanny attraction upon trusting innocent girls by looking into their depths.

The distant strains of three gaily-clad musicians with fiddles and horns seemed to electrify the crowd. The ragged youth began to dance, the old paesani threw their shabby looking caps, in the air, while the little barefooted lazzaroni, his

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face black with dirt, ran ahead of the anxiously expected procession, splitting his throat with shrill cries of "Evviva," and gesticulating frantically.

Only the tall gentleman, with a constant sneer on his red lips, stood apparently unmoved in the same place, gazing at the scene enacted before his eyes with great contempt. Observing him at close range one could perceive, in his dark sinister eyes, the consuming fire of a sinful passion, a volcanic fire it seemed, like that which rose and fell on the summit of the neighboring Vesuvius, devastating in its destructiveness.

He had seen the fair Concetta at Castellamare for the first time, and since then he could not forget her lovely face; day and night it haunted him, that merry, mirthful face that spoke of pure maidenship. The sweetness and childlike pureness of the girl's exterior attracted him. It was something new in his dissipated life, something he had to conquer.

Even at the gaming tables of Nice and Monte Carlo, and at the wild orgies carried on there by the dissipated sons of nobility, he seemed to see her standing before him, smiling sweetly, while

her blue innocent-looking eyes shone at him like spotless mirrors.

After a short time he had discovered that she came twice a week to Castellamare, on Mondays in her father's fishing boat, while on Saturdays in the company of a maid carrying stone pitchers to the well, "Stabilimento," where six different healing springs gush out of the mountain side. When the flames on top of the Vesuvius burst forth vehemently illuminating Naples, Castellamare and all other little hamlets far and near the springs are overflowing with boiling water, but the moment the flame diminishes, the water grows cold and gradually disappears.

The young rogue made good use of these days; as if by chance, he always strolled along the same path to the springs. If it rained, he was promptly at hand with an umbrella; if, on the other hand, the sun shone down oppressively on the overheated Concetta, the same rescuer in need was at hand again, gallantly offering his English parasol, and always walking a little further with her. The sunny nature of the young girl shone out of her splendid blue eyes, bright and beaming as a May

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morning. She trusted every one, and especially this handsome gentleman, who treated her always with such exquisite courtesy, as if she had been one of the daughters of the Lords of Torre del Greco, whom she saw passing on the Corso di Santa Lucia, either on horseback or in a luxurious carriage. Who would be likely to have any evil designs against her? Old and young loved her in the village, and the poor and sick had learned to bless her for three miles round. Having grown up in her village home, and blossomed there like a wild rose, she had only known one great sorrow in her young life, that of losing her beloved mother when she was very young. Her merriment, her happy singing, brightened up the dark, lonely house of the gloomy old man.

However, since she had made the acquaintance of the gentleman with the ensnaring eyes, she had changed greatly. She was often lost in amazement—though not in his company, but when alone in her little bed-chamber, where the observing eyes of her anxious father could not watch her.

There she sat, her large blue eyes staring out of the window, with a feeling of overflowing joy,

that filled her heart, a feeling she could not explain to herself, especially at his approach, the violent beating of something within her that threatened at times to take her breath away.

"Mia cara Concetta, I love you madly," had he not long since whispered in her ear. He has said *that* to her, the common-place daughter of the "Paesano" Niccolo Galliotto. But his dark, passionate-looking eyes made her tremble. She did not know why.

"If he could see me now in my new Sunday dress!" she thought, her glance sweeping over the crowd, as she passed along, surrounded by all the youths and maidens of the village, in her red petticoat and bodice of black silk, with snow white muslin sleeves. "There! Santissima Madonna." "He is waiting for me," she whispered happily, while a blush brighter than the red silk of her dress overspread her lovely face.

But not for all the bunches of red grapes she was so fond of would she have raised her eyes, for fear the youths and maidens might have read in them the delight of her heart at seeing the man she loved and was loved by such a man!—the vio-

lent beating within her increased at this thought. "Madonna!" She looked at the soft blue sky and the waving cactus plants in the distance. Tears of joy filled her eyes, while the golden sunshine filled every nook and corner in Nature's great realm.

Arriving at the house, she found the maid busily engaged in preparing the feast. The men were beginning to place large tables in the garden under the orange trees. Then they rolled out large casks of the new wine from the cellar. Concetta had just put on her apron, busily engaged in carrying out a tray full of dishes into the gaily decorated garden, when the door burst open. Her father stood at the entrance, with his cap in his hand, bowing reverentially to a gentleman, begging him to honor his house by entering and participating in the general frolic of the day.

A loud crash was heard. Concetta recognized him at once, the gentleman with the ensnaring eyes, and, delighted as she was, had dropped the large Sunday tray, with all the special dishes which only appeared on the Sunday table for special occasions. She was startled and happy at the same time, and hardly heard the irate

father's words of blame. The voice of the little lazaroni was heard outside singing "Napoli Bella." She looked through the window, and San Francesco, on his pedestal, smiled at her. She turned about, and met his burning glances. Her cheeks crimsoned; she was in a confusion when those dark fascinating eyes actually followed her wherever she went.

He sat by her side at the table, calling her, Concetta Gallioti, endearing names, and squeezing her hand tenderly whenever the father was not looking in their direction. And when she found his eyes constantly fastened upon her face, she felt like crying and laughing at the same time, thought it looked as if she were even too shy for that.

Her innocent face was like the clear water of the Spring at Castellamare. He observed her closely, knew the symptoms and smiled maliciously, considering it an auspicious omen in his well-tried loving-making scheme.

The evening breezes rose and sank solemnly through the little green olive trees in the distance. The tables were cleared away, the meal was over

and the three grotesque musicians, who had been feasting convivially, were sounding their instruments with special vigor. The dance began. All eyes were turned on Concetta, as she opened the rustic ball with the interesting stranger beneath the orange trees.

Her little heart felt as though it would burst with joy in the consciousness that he had eyes and ears for none but her, and scarcely seemed to see the most renowned beauties of the village. The whole evening he danced only with her—and what things he whispered in her ear! Her fair cheeks still clothed themselves in red—and the more they did so, the more eloquent grew his lips and the more terrifying in its passion his burning gaze.

## II.

At Torre del Greco, in his dining-hall with its lofty windows, the Baron di Pavichino sat at breakfast. His bushy eyebrows contracted darkly when the long-expected visit of his nephew Luigi was announced to him.

Luigi di Pavichino, the passionate lover of the fair Concetta, now entered the room, pale and weary-eyed. For four days he had not been seen in the Palazzo di Pavichino, although not long before he had become engaged to his rich cousin. The fear of exposing himself to her displeasure now brought him here, after changing his clothes for a little more formal attire than that in which he had appeared at the peasants' festival, to explain his absence by a plausible story.

*“Per Bacco!* Lucetta was looking for you in vain yesterday and the day before!” began the old Baron sternly, plucking at his gray beard in a way that betokened displeasure. “If you are beginning already to provide such disappoint-

ments for your future wife, my dear Luigi, then it would possibly be more sensible to call the engagement off while there is yet time."

Luigi trembled at these words of his wealthy uncle. In fact, this marriage was his only plank of salvation, to which he clung with desperate grasp like a man fighting for life in the waves—to which he must cling in order to bring any order into his ruined financial position, which he carefully concealed from his suspecting uncle, and which had to be retrieved as soon as possible.

The fact that the estate inherited from his father, including farms and factories, was mortgaged up to the last cent, would have been sufficient to jeopardize his relations to his unattractive but richly-dowered cousin. He knew the verdict. A long-drawn sigh was the only answer he gave to himself, and besides, there was his incapability of meeting his notes indorsed by friends, falling due within a short time for considerable amounts contracted at the gaming table. Sums which had to be paid because they were debts of honor, for which he pledged his "parole d' honneur."

“Forgive me, dear uncle,” he began stumblingly, with these reflections in mind.

“I went to see the Padre at the Monastery to tell him of my engagement and there—the kind monk—the harvest—the new wine—

The weatherbeaten features of the old nobleman took on a more cheerful expression at these words.

“Per bacco!” he began, smacking his lips and winking slyly, “it must have been the new Lacrima Christi wine I sent him last week, which has made all the mischief. Ho! ho! if that’s the case, my dear boy, you will soon taste the wine that will be worth the tasting,” he added with a broad grin, smacking his lips again in a manner attributable to the thorough knowledge of an old wine gourmand.

“Yes, my boy, the same Lacrima Christi will be served at your wedding next month.”

The atmosphere was sultry, but he shivered; and if a mirror could have been held before his eyes he would have startled back alarmed from the gray stony face so unlike his.

“Next month?” he stammered.

Until now he tried to forget the whole affair; her image was so utterly driven from his fickle heart as if it were buried twenty feet under the ruins of Herculaneum.

"Yes, my dear Luigi, I shall write at once to Torro Annunziata, and then we will celebrate a merry wedding and invite all—Why, what's the matter?" he asked greatly bewildered. "What a wry face you are making?"

"It is the pleasure—the unlooked-for surprise,—" stammered Luigi with difficulty, while his pale face grew a shade paler. The sweet face of Concetta, with the bewitching dimples from which little mocking Cupids seemed to peep out, challenging him like a siren to a kiss; her silvery laughter, her deep blue eyes like a fairy's—all that came up before his interior vision with intoxicating strength, while the thought that in four weeks he would be called upon to plight his troth to his unlovely cousin made him shudder.

Still he was careful not to drop the veil that hid his real thoughts so carefully in the presence of his suspicious uncle.



CONFESSING ALL TO THE WONDER-WORKING SAINT



"Pleasure? Ho! ho! my dear Luigi, I thought as much. Young men, young men! I have not forgotten my own youth yet—a little wild it was." He chuckled half to himself, in a low voice.

"Can I—see my *finance* now?" Luigi asked, in a half stifled voice.

"Now? So early? No, dear boy, she is still among her pillows—dreaming of you! *Per Dio!* today, though, is the great festival of Saint Cecelia. Our good neighbors from Torre del Greco, Portici, and Torre Annunziata will be sure to gather at Castellamare. We must go too. You shall go with Lucecca in my victoria with the four fiery Arabs, and I will follow the happy pair in a plainer carriage," continued the old baron with nods of pleasure.

It was at the same festival, at the chapel of Saint Cecelia, that he hoped this very evening to meet Concetta. The room seemed to spin round him and grow dark. "By your leave, my dear uncle, I must go at once to the club. You know, the joyful news—"

"Of your engagement?"

"Haven't you mentioned it yet to your friends," he cried, a picture of wild-eyed amazement.

"To be sure I have, but—the early date of the wedding—" he hastened to reply in a dull voice, wiping the cold perspiration from his brow.

Catching up his hat and cane, he took a hasty leave from his Uncle, with the promise to come back punctually at four o'clock. He rushed away tortured by this dreaded thought in mind; but he had to see the small army of creditors and keep them at bay with their insolent demands for money, which were becoming intolerable until after the most dreaded wedding.

## III.

In Castellamare every year little shrines are erected for the feast of St. Cecelia as far as the Hotel di Stabia, which is close to the beautiful bay of Naples, known to the tourists of all nations. In these shrines, decorated with silken draperies of different colors, immense wax tapers are burning, amid which roughly painted images of the wonder-working saint are seen shining out mercifully in the brilliant afternoon sun.

She looked down with mild eyes, upon the devout multitude, that hung up their votive offerings of waxen hands, feet and hearts with tearful eyes. Then deep in prayer they besought through her the blessed Virgin's help for their various ills and woes; kissing devoutly the silken drapery.

Concetta in her new Sunday dress stood there among the praying throng. After praying for a while she moved towards the Holy shrine; her eyes moistened when she fastened with trembling hands a little waxen heart to the drapery looking up imploringly.

She saw her benignant gaze, and knelt down, confessing all to the wonder-working saint, and besought her to heal her sick heart. She hardly knew what oppressed her so, and what made her so immensely happy, at the same time. To her, woods and fields were indeed vocal, every flitting bird and gurgling brook, every passing cloud and whispering breeze brought messages of love from him. To the mercy of God and the love of Christ she now committed her love. Today in the boundless reverence and religious enthusiasm she felt the need of his presence so much more.

She looked right and left. "Something must have happened," she murmured to herself, greatly disappointed, as it was almost twilight, and nowhere was to be seen the tall imposing figure of the fascinating man so dear to her. The sun had gone down and the shadows of the summer evening commenced to gather in the near forest, and climbed, like trooping spirits, up the rocky mountain side.

"He was always so punctual," her voice faltered suddenly, and it grew dark before her eyes; she trembled so that she was obliged to grasp

one of the large candle-holders near her in order to keep her from falling to the ground.

An elegant carriage with four horses had just dashed by, in which she fancied she saw her lover with a richly dressed lady; her heart contracted painfully. Sadly, with downcast eyes praying continually, she took her way back to the village.

Although with her pure and simple views of life, there was no room for doubt in her loving heart, still the disquieting thoughts that he must be rich and of high position, she could not keep altogether away. How else could he be driving about with a signora apparently of nobility? Involuntarily, hot tears trickled down her red cheeks out of the great blue eyes, like drops of rain from a patch of blue sky.

When Luigi came to the village on the following day he found Concetta's eyes swollen with weeping. She scarcely dared to raise them, still heavy with tears, to his face, for fear he should read in them her great love for him.

Luigi Pavichino, the young *roue*, who had succeeded quickly enough with his flattering words in making her forget the cause of her secret grief,

now laughed lightly with a merriment that had none too pleasant a sound, as if he were well used to such scenes of jealousy. He called her his dear little bride, whom he loved and would always love, and therewith he kissed her rosy lips passionately, assuring her on his honor that he had been driving in no carriage, but had been at the monastery with the Padre, and then at five o'clock had come to Saint Cecelia's shrine, without seeing her.

The nearer the wedding day approached, the oftener Luigi came to the village, assuring her always of the unchangeableness of his love.

## IV.

The old cloister of Santa Croce, with its classic columns, had today a festive appearance. In front of the garden, sloping down at the mountain's side, one gets a glimpse at the river Sarno, where the Porta di Stabia once was located, and the image of Minerva in terra cotta—the guardian Deity of Pompeii, was excavated intact, now in the Museum at Naples.

The old chapel was gayly decorated with rare flowers and tropical plants today, and the finest adornments of the ancient cloister, which had slumbered peacefully and been forgotten in their cupboards for a century, were brought out by the serving brothers, and cleansed and dusted of their cobwebs. They whispered excitedly putting their heads together, for the marriage of a high-born couple was a rare event within these ancient walls.

The fat prior smiled in the triple folds of his chin, on all the preparations, with quite unusual benevolence. His little steel-gray eyes, keen and shrewd in their glance, fairly sparkled as he

thought of the rich fee which would come to his cloister on such an occasion from a generous noble house.

The cook of the monastery, Brother Salvatore, had some days earlier announced the festive event to Concetta's father, who supplied them with fish on fast-days. Concetta was quite childishly delighted. A noble wedding—the handsome pair—the rich costumes—all that she had never seen in her whole life; so she teased her father until he promised to take her to the wedding. Her cheeks glowed, her big eyes sparkled with pleasure, when she was sitting in the boat in her Sunday best and thinking of all the splendors that were going to be exhibited before her.

“If I understood aright the look Saint Cecelia gave me, I shall soon be standing there too!” she whispered to herself with a happy smile, while her father sat opposite her and plied the oars with accustomed hands. “Oh, the happiness, the happiness of belonging to him!” she went on in her whispered colloquy with herself, both hands clasped before her face, blushing with maidenly modesty.

Gloomy clouds began to obscure the sun. The magnificent landscape was in a few minutes wrapped, as it were, in a dark veil of mist. With shining eyes she sat in the boat watching the sky, and drinking draughts of joy with which mingled no drop of sin or selfishness in its crystal waves of purity; for she had grown up with nature as ignorant as her plants at home, of the roar and strife, the burning hate and cunning intrigue of the great world of men and women.

Frequent puffs of wind made the boat now tremble and rock. The fear of an approaching storm had laid hold of the animal world as well; the terrified sea-gulls flew wildly over Concetta's head, while a hideous owl in the neighboring olive-grove uttered its long-drawn, harsh notes, which floated out over the river. Concetta saw and heard nothing. Her thoughts were with the man to whom she had given herself in almost superhuman love, whom she was tempted to adore like the holy image of Christ before which she knelt in lowly reverence, imploring His blessing on her beloved.

She heard the sound of the great bell, which was only rung on great occasions; the nearer she came, the more joyfully beat her heart. A gaily-decked steamer lay already at the landing stage, so that they had to go a little further in order to land. They had no sooner found a place where they could moor their boat than Concetta with impatient haste sprang ashore. They then climbed the steep hill as quickly as possible. Great rain-drops fell again, and began to wet Concetta's Sunday dress.

At last they reached the cloister; but they had come near missing the ceremony. The solemn tones of the organ were still sounding impressively through the chapel. Concetta, with shining eyes and wet through and through, was standing near the chapel door, contemplating the undreamed-of splendor of costumes of the high-born ladies. The bridal pair, surrounded by wedding guests congratulating them heartily, were not yet visible.

“Now! now!” there was a general movement towards the outer door of the chapel.

"Here they are coming now," whispered Concetta with sparkling eyes full of expectation, to her father, whose head was bowed reverently. Everybody rushed on in order to have an advantageous place when the bridal party passed.

Girls all in white came first, carrying bouquets in their hands, and then Luigi—pale and haggard—looking like a bad conscience personified; and on his arm came the bride all in white!

Concetta saw and heard no more.

The tortured image of Saint Antoni in the entrance stared ghostly at her, dripping drops of blood. The decaying walls of the old cloister tottered about her, flames sprang up towards her from yawning abysses; lightning shot across her brain, and Beelzebub with his infernal band gnashed his teeth at her in a laugh of malicious triumph.

She recoiled, dazed with awe-struck terror without a sound, without a cry she moved unobserved by the jostling crowd behind Luigi. Her blue eyes wide open never turned from him an instant, as if struck dumb by a horror too great for words or cry.

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A little keen steel blade was glistening in her hand, and the next instant Luigi was stabbed through his treacherous heart. He fell senseless at the feet of his newly wedded bride.

The frightened wedding guests, fearing a fainting spell, rushed to him, but the blood was now flowing freely from the spot where she had stabbed him. Nobody saw her do it. He was quickly carried into the monastery, followed by the wedding guests.

Concetta uttered a wild cry, and rushed weeping aloud down the hill towards the harbor. It was already dark; the wind was now blowing with the vehemence of a hurricane over the foaming waters, and the roar of thunder shook the bathing-houses on the left hand side of the harbor. Concetta, with a sudden headlong rush, breathless and horrified had reached the landing pier. With a loud cry she threw herself into the foaming waves and disappeared.

At the same moment her father and brother Salvatore, running after her, had reached the water.

Poor Niccolo, trembling in every limb, was at first rendered almost helpless with horror; but the despair which began to hold sway over him gave him now superhuman strength. With frantic haste he unfastened his little boat, and rowed gesticulating wildly to the spot where he had seen her sink. He loved his only daughter with a love that was akin to idolatry. His grey hair fluttered wildly about his furrowed and heated brow; great tears trickled down his dark cheeks, and panting aloud he gazed down into the foaming gloomy depths.

“Santissima!” he cried aloud, “Madonna! My greatest treasure—my only child! Have mercy!”

A vivid flash of lightning illuminated the stormy surface and then—he saw the red dress floating upon the waves. “Cara mia!” he cried, with a stammering tongue, wild with joy when he had grasped her and dragged the dear form into the boat. Calling her ceaselessly by endearing names, he pressed her to his heart as though to bring back warmth and life to her young body, and covered her dear face with passionate kisses,

but the beautiful head fell back pale and lifeless; the great blue eyes were closed; she was dead.

With horror in his wide strained eyes, and pallor on his quivering lips, he gazed at the prostrate form before him, the lifeless eyes staring now blankly at the sky,—the hue of life and exuberant health still glowing on the full cheeks adorned with every grace of youth and beauty.

“Morte—morte!” stammered the father, frantic with grief, tearing his grey hair despairingly. No merry glance, no roguish smile she had any more for him.

“Figlia mia morte!” he cried, beating his breast wildly. “You will be avenged, none of them will escape!” And holding the dead Concetta in his arms, he stood there erect with flaming eyes and panting breath swearing the oath of the deadly feud between him and the family, clenching his fists threateningly. The mighty grief tore at his heart strings and finally, brought bitter tears to his burning eyes, great drops streaming down over his grief-stricken face.

On the pier, Brother Salvatore had sunk upon his knees and clasped the silver crucifix, which hung at his side by a cord. Holding it out towards the boat, he raised his voice, “Benedizione!” he cried aloud. A shiver shook his emaciated frame as if the spectacle which he beheld, would have burned itself indelibly upon his memory.

The lightning flashes showed from afar the silver cross as it were—a symbol of atonement and—forgiveness.









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